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Most polluted river stretches remain so

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A rally to heal gashes, says Kamal

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Ready for talks, but Kyiv unwilling: Putin

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Forest rights and heritage conservation

Local residents need to be consulted first

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ACING THE CHASE

Ashwin, Shreyas star in India's series sweep

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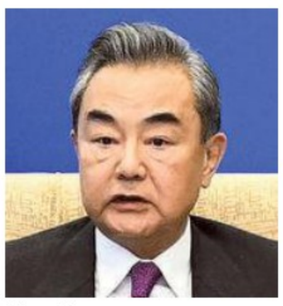
Ready to work with India for steady growth of ties: China

Both countries committed to upholding stability in border areas... and have maintained communication through various channels: Minister

Press Trust of India
BEIJING



Wang Yi

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Sunday that China was ready to work with India for the "steady and sound growth" of bilateral ties and the two countries were committed to upholding stability in the border areas where tensions had prevailed since 2020.

Addressing a symposium on the international situation and China's foreign relations in 2022, Mr. Wang said both countries had maintained communication through diplomatic and military-to-military channels. "China and India have maintained communication through the diplomatic and military-to-military channels, and both countries are committed to upholding stability in the border areas," said Mr. Wang, who has been elevated to the ruling Communist Party of China's (CPC) high-power political bureau during the recent party Congress.

"We stand ready to work with India in the direction toward steady and sound growth of China-India relations," he said.

Mr. Wang, along with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, is the Special Representative of the India-China boundary mechanism which has remained dormant in the present set of border stand-offs.

In his lengthy address on China's diplomatic work, Mr. Wang focused more on China's troubled ties with the U.S. and burgeoning relations with Russia, despite the Ukraine war.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

In riveting political drama in Nepal, 'Prachanda' named Prime Minister

Kallol Bhattacherjee
Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Another term: Pushpa Kamal Dahal hands over his documents to President Bidhya Devi Bhandari in Kathmandu on Sunday. AFP

Nepal President Bidhya Devi Bhandari on Sunday appointed Pushpa Kamal Dahal, leader of the parliamentary party of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), Prime Minister of the Himalayan nation.

A communication from the President's Office in Sital Nivas said Mr. Dahal, better known as 'Prachanda', would be sworn in as Prime Minister at 4 p.m. on Monday.

Seven parties and three Independent MPs led by former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) came together in a dramatic move for a post-poll alliance on Sunday and wrote to the President proposing the name of Mr. Prachanda as the prime ministerial candidate of the Left-dominant coalition. Mr. Prachanda and his CPN (Maoist Centre) have the support of 169 elected members in the Pratinidhi Sabha, the Lower House, representing the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), the Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP), led by Ravi Lamichhane, the pro-monarchy Rashtriya Prajatantra Party, the Nagarik Unmukti Party, the Janata Samajwadi Party of Madhesi leader Upendra Yadav and the Janamat Party of former secessionist leader C.K. Raut.

'Unique relationship'

Congratulating Mr. Prachanda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "The unique relationship between India and Nepal is based on deep cultural connect and warm people-to-people ties. I look forward to working together with you to further strengthen this friendship."

Officials, however, said New Delhi would watch the development closely, given that the RSP, one of the key constituents of the Leftist coalition, has criticised India for building an embankment along the Mahakali river at Dharchula, that has led to protests by Nepalese on the other side.

This will be the third time that the former Maoist rebel leader will be the Prime Minister of the Himalayan nation. He served in 2008-09 when he had to step down because of a political crisis over sharing of power. His second stint came in 2016 when he took over from Mr. Oli against the backdrop of an economic blockade of Nepal during 2015-16 by the Madhesi agitators.

CONTINUED ON
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NEARBY

BBMP to launch bill discounting scheme

BENGALURU
To provide relief to contractors who have been waiting for at least two years to get their bills cleared, the BBMP has decided to introduce a bill discounting scheme. » Page 3

OBC federation threatens to approach court

BELAGAVI
The OBC federation in the State has threatened to approach the court against the government if it were to include Panchamasalis under 2A category of the OBC reservation matrix. » Page 4

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 5

Reddy launches party; to contest polls from Gangavati

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

G. Janardhana Reddy
SUDHAKARA JAIN

Ending weeks of speculation over his political moves, the former BJP leader and mining baron Gali Janardhana Reddy on Sunday announced the launch of his new party – Kalyana Rajya Pragathi Paksha – that will fight the 2023 Assembly elections. The former Minister announced that he would contest from Gangavati in Koppal district.

The details of the party symbol, flag, office, officer-bearers, and the number of constituencies to contest across the State would be announced in about two weeks, Mr. Reddy told presspersons here. "My name has been enrolled in the voters' list in Gangavati and we have taken a house there. I will definitely contest the next elections from Gangavati," he announced. It will also mark the electoral debut for Mr. Reddy, who has been a member of the Legislative Council before. He said that he and his wife, Aruna Lakshmi, would travel all the 30 districts for campaigning.

The BJP had distanced itself from the former Minister, who has been accused of illegal iron ore mining in Ballari earlier.

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Agra man from China tests positive for COVID-19

Press Trust of India
AGRA

A 40-year-old man, who returned from China two days ago, has tested positive for COVID-19 following which he has been isolated at his home here, Chief Medical Officer Arun Srivastava said on Sunday.

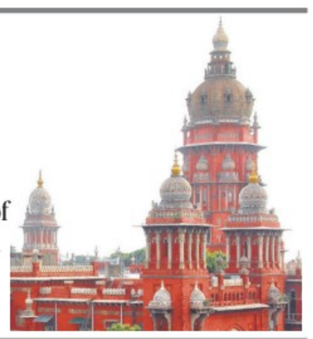
"His samples will be sent to Lucknow for genome sequencing. His family members will be tested," Mr. Srivastava said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

'Blind leading the blind,' irked HC rebukes judicial officers for a comedy of errors

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

> We are constrained to use harsh words in this order since the nature of allegations is very serious and it involves the safety and security of this State and the nation
> **JUSTICES P.N. PRAKASH & N. ANAND VENKATESH**
> Madras High Court



The Madras High Court has criticised a sessions judge, a judicial magistrate and the police for being ignorant of legal procedures even in a case involving national security. The court has directed the Tamil Nadu State Judicial Academy to conduct refresher courses for judicial officers with special focus on enactments such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967.

Dealing with the bail plea of a person, suspected to be an Islamic State (IS) member, Justices P.N. Prakash and N. Anand Venkatesh said the wrong procedures followed by a judicial magistrate on the directions of a sessions judge remind them of Jesus Christ's f parable where he asked his disciples, "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not fall into a pit?"

'Mechanical fashion'

They went on to state: "We are constrained to use harsh words in this order since the nature of allegations as could be seen from the orders is very serious and it involves the safety and security of this State and the nation. It is quite unfortunate that a specialised agency [such as the 'Q' branch or the National Investigation Agency] did not take over the investigation."

Authoring the verdict, Justice Venkatesh also lamented that "the respondent [Inspector of the Ambur Town police station in Tirupattur district] was proceeding in the case in a mechanical fashion. To add insult to injury, even the trained judicial officers were ignorant with respect to the procedures to be adopted in a case involving offences under the 1967 UAP Act."

The Division Bench pointed out that the Ambur police had registered a case against Mir Anas Ali on July 30, 2022 on the charge of being a member of the IS and arrested him on the same day for alleged offences under the UAP Act and the Indian Penal Code. A magistrate in Ambur had remanded him in judicial custody.

Since the police failed to complete the probe and file a final report within 90 days of his arrest, the accused preferred a bail application before the magistrate on November 11, 2022 seeking statutory bail.

The magistrate rightly returned the application on the ground that the bail plea could be preferred only before the sessions court.

CONTINUED ON
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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Prachanda becomes Nepal's PM

168 The number of lawmakers who backed the former Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" to form a new government in Nepal. The surprise development may not bode well for India-Nepal ties as Prachanda and his main backer K.P. Sharma Oli have some previous run-ins with New Delhi over territorial issues. PTI

Britain to increase military spending by over billion pounds

1 In billion pounds, the amount by which Britain will increase defence spending to avoid a real-terms cut over the next two years, the *Telegraph* reported. Finance minister Jeremy Hunt is expected to announce the increase in his budget in the spring, it said. It said military experts estimate that the Ministry of Defence budget in 2024-25 will rise to 50.1 billion pounds. Reuters

France's aerospace firm to pay a hefty sum to settle charges

17.2 In $ million, the amount France's Safran will pay as part of a settlement with the U.S. Justice Department over bribes paid in China by its subsidiaries before they were acquired by the jet engine maker. The charges relate to alleged bribes taken by two French aircraft engine maker's subsidiaries, Monogram Systems, and Evac GmbH. AFP

Railways to modernise small stations under new scheme

1,000 The number of small yet important stations the railways is planning to modernise under its new "Amrit Bharat Station Scheme". This is apart from the ambitious plan to revamp 200 big stations. Officials said the small stations would be identified not just for their footfalls but also based on the cities they cater to. PTI

Foreign investors infused crores in equities in December

11,557 In ₹ crore, the amount invested by Foreign investors in Indian equities in December so far, despite concerns over re-emergence of COVID in China and other parts of the world. This comes following a net investment of ₹36,200 crore due to weakening of the US dollar index. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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The emerging Omicron sublineages

What led to the recent outbreak of COVID-19 cases in China? What are the SARS-CoV-2 lineages circulating in the country? Which Omicron sublineages has the WHO put under the 'Omicron subvariants under monitoring' category?

EXPLAINER

Bani Jolly
Vinod Scaria

The story so far:

Since the initial outbreak in 2019 in Wuhan, China, the world has seen multiple repeated waves of COVID-19 infections over the past few years, largely driven by the emerging variants of concern (VOCs) of the causative virus, SARS-CoV-2. However, until recently, China remained successful in containing the spread of the disease owing to its zealous "zero-COVID" policy, which included mass quarantines, lockdowns, and early vaccination programmes. As a result of the abrupt lifting of the policy, the country is now facing a surge of COVID-19 cases.

On a rise: Medical staff assist patients at a clinic treating COVID-19 patients, in China. GETTY IMAGES

What are the SARS-CoV-2 lineages circulating in China?

Over the course of the pandemic, genome sequencing of the virus and rapid sharing of data has been key to tracking the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 and early identification of emerging variants. SARS-CoV-2 sequencing data previously submitted from China to GISAID, a globally accessible repository of SARS-CoV-2 genome sequences, shows that over the months, the country has seen isolated cases linked to multiple variants of the virus seen previously. These include Delta and its sublineages in 2021, and Omicron and its sublineages in 2022. Only 30 sequences of SARS-CoV-2 collected between October-December 2022 are available on GISAID from China. These belong to 14 different lineages of SARS-CoV-2, all of which are Omicron sublineages, including BA.5.2, BQ.1.1, BF.7, BF.5, BA.2.75 and the recombinant lineage XBB.

Of the 14 genomes from China available on GISAID for the month of December, two genomes each belong to the Omicron sublineages BF.7, BF.5 and BA.2.75, while one genome belongs to the recombinant lineage XBB. Lineages BF5 and BF.7 of SARS-CoV-2, while first detected in January 2022 in France, have also been previously detected in India in May and July 2022, respectively, while lineage BA.2.75 was first detected in India as early as December 2021. The recombinant lineage XBB has also been previously detected in early 2021 in multiple countries in Asia, including India and Singapore. With the limited number of genomes available corresponding to the ongoing outbreak, we are still in the dark about the variants driving the wave in China.

Which Omicron sublineages are under monitoring?

Owing to the large-scale spread of Omicron and its sublineages across the world, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has added another category of variants referred to as 'Omicron subvariants under monitoring'.

Currently, the Omicron subvariants being monitored under this category include BA.2.75, BA.4.6, XBB, BA.2.3.20 and sublineages of BA.5 including BF.7 and BQ.1. While the first sample belonging to lineage BA.4.6 dates back to December 2021, lineage BA.2.3.20 was detected in multiple countries recently in August 2022.

What is the XBB lineage?

The SARS-CoV-2 virus has the potential to evolve by exchanging large fragments of the genome, called recombination. First detected in January 2022, the XBB lineage of SARS-CoV-2 resulted from recombinant between Omicron sublineages BA.2.10.1 and BA.2.75. The lineage was largely detected in genomes from Singapore and India, with the largest number of genomes on GISAID belonging to the U.S. and India. Although detected in over 30 countries, there has been no observed association of the lineage with a sustained increase in new cases in India but has become now the dominant variant in many countries seeing an uptick in infections. Monitoring the prevalence of XBB and its sublineages will therefore be essential in the days to come.

Although BA.5 was first detected in November 2021, certain BA.5 sublineages having mutations at key antigenic sites in the virus have emerged over the months, including BF.7, BF.14 and BQ.1. Lineage BQ.1 is a BA.5 sublineage having the mutations K444T and N460K in the spike protein of the virus. Accounting for over 5% of global cases, the variant has been seen to have a growth advantage over other lineages in highly vaccinated regions including Europe and the U.S., thus making it important to monitor the spread and evolution of this sublineage.

With waning immunity to vaccination and prior Omicron waves leading to reinfections, genomic surveillance will be the key to understanding the continuing evolution of Omicron. Being immune-naive to Omicron, an overwhelming surge of cases in a populous country such as China will not only cause massive loss to life but will also allow the virus to mutate with the potential to create new variants. Wide-ranging efforts are thus urgently required to monitor the COVID-19 situation in China and other countries, including genomic surveillance and the use of time-tested methods with significant scientific evidence.

(The authors are researchers at the CSIR Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in Delhi. All opinions expressed are personal)

THE GIST

- Until recently, China remained successful in containing the spread of the disease owing to its zealous "zero-COVID" policy. However, the abrupt lifting of the policy has led to a surge of COVID-19 cases.
- SARS-CoV-2 sequencing data previously submitted from China to GISAID shows that over the months, the country has seen isolated cases linked to multiple variants of the virus seen previously.
- Wide-ranging efforts are urgently required to monitor the COVID-19 situation in China and other countries, including genomic surveillance and the use of time-tested methods with significant scientific evidence.

What is the caste row in K.R. Narayan Institute in Kerala?

What caused the stir in the film school? How is the institute reacting to the protests by students? How did the film industry respond to the agitation?

Hiran Unnikrishnan

The story so far:

All 83 students of the State-run K.R. Narayanan National Institute of Visual Science and Arts, a film school at Thekkumthala, Kottayam, have been on an indefinite strike since December 5. The students have been demanding the ouster of Shankar Mohan, director of the school, for allegedly discriminating against the students and staff on the basis of caste. Although the State Higher Education Minister, R. Bindu, entrusted a three-member committee with investigating the complaints, it has now instituted a high-level inquiry on the issue. The new team has been instructed to submit their findings in two weeks.

What caused the strike?

The institute has witnessed several waves of protests since its opening in 2016. In the latest bout of protest, led by the students' council of the school, they have raised a set of charges against Mr. Mohan that varied from caste discrimination to forcing sanitation workers to do domestic labour at his official residence, including cleaning of toilets. According to the students, Mr. Mohan took the lead in shortening three-year courses offered by the institute into two-year programmes without due consultation and research.

The sanitation workers, employed by the institute on a daily wage basis, have testified their experience of receiving an inhumane treatment at the hands of Mr. Mohan. Another Dalit employee of the institute has approached the SC/ST commission with a complaint of caste discrimination against Mr. Mohan.

Documents that emerged in the public domain showed that as many as 26 out of the 30 seats reserved for different categories of students have not been filled while admitting students to the 2022 batch. It showed that several candidates were denied admission with the abrupt introduction of cut-off marks by the institute's academic committee.

How did the film world respond?

The protest, which had been largely limited to the institute's campus in the first few days, struck a chord with film makers, film students as well as cinephiles during the 27th International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) in Thiruvananthapuram. An array of faces from contemporary Malayalam cinema, including filmmakers Aashiq Abu, Mahesh Narayanan, Jeo Baby, Kamal, K.M. Kamal, Vidhu Vincent, actor Sajitha Madathil and musician Shahabaz Aman joined the students at a protest staged at the main venue of the event.

How did the institute handle it?

Mr. Mohan has stayed largely aloof from the public eye. But talking to *The Hindu*, he denied all the charges and maintained that "the truth has a way of revealing itself". Eminent filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan, chairman of the institute, has been firm in his support for Mr. Mohan and described him as a 'well-bred man'. The statement, however, drew sharp reactions and the protesters issued an open letter challenging Mr. Gopalakrishnan's stance.

The institution, meanwhile, is also accused of indulging in retaliatory action by cancelling the room reservations for 52 students who arrived in Thiruvananthapuram to attend the IFFK. Though the students attempted to contact the director and other officials, their calls went unattended. The State Chalachitra Academy later arranged temporary accommodation for the students.

What does the government say?

The State government has taken a serious note of the issue as is evident from its decision to institute a high-level inquiry into the issue. It, at the same time, does not want to antagonise Adoor Gopalakrishnan, a filmmaker of towering stature, and is treading a cautious path before taking any final decision.

THE GIST

- Students have been demanding the ouster of Shankar Mohan, director of the school, for allegedly discriminating against the students and staff of the institution on the basis of caste.
- Sanitation workers, employed by the institute on a daily wage basis, have testified their experience of receiving an inhumane treatment at the hands of Mr. Mohan.
- The State government has taken a serious note of the issue as is evident from its decision to institute a high-level inquiry into the issue.

CMYK S BG-BGE

INBRIEF

Name expressway after Krishnaraja Wadiyar: MLCs

Elected representatives from Mandya district have sought Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar's name for the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway. The demand comes close on the heels of an appeal by Pratap Simha, Mysuru MP, for naming the expressway on Cauvery river as 'Cauvery Expressway'. As the Maharaja of Mysore who ruled for nearly four decades between 1902 and 1940, the late Maharaja cultivated a humanistic vision of community co-existence which shaped the Old Mysore. The coming up of modern Karnataka was due to the efforts of Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar (1884-1940), said Congress MLCs Madhu G. Made Gowda and Dinesh Gooli Gowda, in their letter to Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.

The MLCs have also submitted separate representations to Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and Public Works Minister C.C. Patil on the demand.

Modi to inaugurate National Youth Festival in Dharwad

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be visiting Dharwad on January 12 to inaugurate the National Youth Festival being organised jointly by the Union and the State governments to mark the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

Addressing presspersons after visiting various places in Dharwad where the events of the festival will be held from January 12 to 16, Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi said the festival would symbolise national integration and would celebrate India's unity in diversity.

"It will be a record of sorts as over 7,500 delegates from all States will stay in Dharwad for five days to participate in various events and also showcase their arts and culture," he said.

The year of waxing and waning COVID-19 cases

The State recorded nearly a lakh new infections from January to April after which the third wave started receding; 2022 also saw many people reporting post-COVID complications

REWIND 2022

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

A BBMP health worker collecting swab samples for testing for COVID-19 at Yeshwantpur railway station in Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

Although 2022 will be remembered as a "COVID waning year", the year is ending on a note of caution as another outbreak has emerged in some countries and many precautions that were done away with only recently are now being reintroduced.

The first half of this year saw the Omicron-driven third wave, but the severity was low and the demand for hospital beds and oxygen was negligible.

Outside of COVID-19, two ICU deaths at Vijayanagara Institute of Medical Sciences (VIMS) in Ballari, following a power failure and defunct generators at the hospital in mid-September, and the death of a pregnant woman with newborn twins at her residence in Tumakuru in November – after she was refused admission at the district hospital there – underlined the gaps in health infrastructure.

Rapid rise in infections

The year began with a rapid rise in Omicron infections following which the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) issued an advisory on 'Purposive Testing Strategy' that said that all contacts of COVID-19 patients need not be tested. Considering the pace of infections then, the advisory came as a relief. Despite that, the State recorded nearly a lakh new infections from January to April after which the third wave started waning.

The year also saw many people reporting post-COVID complications including hypoglycaemia, brain fog, stroke, cardiac and diabetic foot conditions apart from tinnitus, hair loss and mask acne too.

Precaution dose

On January 10, the Union government started administering booster (precaution) dose in a phased manner to eligible population groups such as healthcare workers and elderly population with co-morbid conditions. This was extended to all above 18 years from April 10 only in private hospitals at a price. And, from July 15, this was provided free of cost for all to ensure more people take the booster shot. Despite this, the uptake has been poor.

On January 3, vaccination of children aged 15-17 years began and subsequently in March it was opened up for children aged 12-14 years. The State's third sero-survey involving unvaccinated children taken up this year found 75.38% of children in Karnataka exposed to SARS-CoV-2.

The year also saw 11 suspected monkeypox cases and one confirmed case of Zika virus. Dengue has been on the rise and the total number of cases have crossed 9,000 exceeding last year's tally.

Organ donations, brain health

On the positive side, the State achieved a milestone in cadaveric organ donation, crossing the century mark in the first nine months and touching 146 presently.

Eye pledging also got a boost following Kannada actor Puneeth Rajkumar's eye donation. His donation not just gave the gift of sight to four people, but also inspired nearly a lakh people to pledge their eyes.

Prohibitory orders clamped for two days in Surathkal

Strict vigil: Police deployed in large numbers at Surathkal in Mangaluru on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTSPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

Mangaluru Police Commissioner N. Shashi Kumar on Sunday clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code in Surathkal and adjoining areas to maintain law and order after Abdul Jaleel, 45, the owner of a fancy shop, was allegedly stabbed to death at Katipalla, near Surathkal, around 8 p.m. on Saturday.

The prohibitory orders which came into effect from 6 a.m. on Sunday are in place in the jurisdictions of Panambur, Surathkal, Bajpe, and Kavoor police station limits till 6 a.m. on December 27.

The movement of people in a group of five and more, and carrying weapons have been banned during this period.

The order exempted Christmas celebrations, religious programmes, and emergency services, a notification issued by the Commissioner said.

Police said Jaleel was a resident of Fourth Block, Katipalla-Krishnapura, and the youngest of five brothers. He was attacked by two unknown persons while at his shop. Though he escaped and tried to run away, the assailants followed and stabbed him. Jaleel succumbed to the injury at a private hospital in Mukka, near Surathkal.

Five taken into custody

The city police have taken five persons, including two women, into their custody for questioning in connection with the investigation into the alleged murder of 45-year-old fancy store owner Abdul Jaleel near his shop in Katipalla 4th Block, near Surathkal, on Saturday night.

The police investigating the murder suspect Jaleel knowing a couple of women resulting in some people who were also close with these women attacking Jaleel.

Progressive writers plan alternative Sammelana on Jan. 8 in protest against 'exclusions' in Haveri meet

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

The 86th Akhila Bharata Kannada Sahitya Sammelana, to be held from January 6 to 8, 2023, is now facing allegations by some quarters of "neglecting" Muslim writers and women writers in the main inaugural and closing ceremonies and key sessions. Some have decided to organise an alternative sahitya sammelana on January 8 in Bengaluru as a mark of protest.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, scholar Purushottama Bilimale said, "Exclusion of Muslim writers and gender disparity is undemocratic. Therefore, progressive writers have decided to organise an alternative sahitya sammelana on January 8, in Bengaluru. We organising it through crowd funding and it will be inclusive."

> Exclusion of Muslim writers and gender disparity is undemocratic. Therefore, progressive writers have decided to organise an alternative sahitya sammelana in Bengaluru.
>
> **PURUSHOTTAMA BILIMALE**
> Scholar

The Kannada Sahitya Parishath (KSP) has organised the annual sammelana at Haveri. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will inaugurate it, and many elected representatives and thousand of writers will participate.

Meanwhile, there is an allegation that among the 40 speakers in various sessions, there is no representation for minority writers or subject experts in key sessions on the main stages. The KSP is felicitating 83 achievers in the different fields, but there are no Muslims among them, it is being alleged. Beary language, spoken by a subsect of Muslims in coastal Karnataka, is excluded in the discussion on "diversity of languages".

B.M. Haneef, senior journalist, said, "This year, a Muslim writer, Dadapir Jaiman, has got Central awards. Senior writers such as Boluvaru Mohammad Kunhi, Sara Aboobacker, Hasan Naeem Surakoda, and Rahmat Tarikare have been ignored."

It is also being alleged that compared to previous years, women writers have been neglected in inaugural and closing ceremonies. Prof. Bilimale, in a Facebook post, argued that these "exclusions" at the sammelana are not accidental but an "RSS mentality" has worked behind them.

'KSP belongs to no ideology'

However, responding to allegations, president of KSP Mahesh Joshi said the parishath belongs to "no ideology, either left, right or even centre."

"We have not discriminated against any writers on the basis of caste, community, or religion. Kannada language is our caste and religion. A 14-member selection committee has decided all these seminars, guests, and others programmes. This year, we have given importance to fresh faces in all seminars and programmes. We dedicated the prime stage to saint poets Kanaka-Shishunala Sharif-Sarvajna. For the first time in the history of the KSP, we launched the Kannada chariot across the State. The chief architecture this chariot is Shah Jahan Mudakavi and its supervisor is Nabi Sab Kushtagi. So, there is no question of discrimination on the basis of caste and discrimination," he said.

Concessional passes

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The concessional passes for physically challenged persons will be issued from Monday. KSRTC in a release said that the applicants have to apply for pass through seva sindhu online portal only. The validity of passes issued in the year 2022 has been extended up to February 28.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT
Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru.

No: FD 05 BMB 2022 Date: 22.12.2022

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK(SECURITIES)

1. Aggregate Amount : **Total Rs. 4000 Crore (Rs.2000 Crore (10 Year Tenure) and Rs.2000 Crore (12 Year Tenure)**
2. Method of Issue : By auction, through PDO, RBI, Mumbai (Fort)
3. Date of Auction : **December 27, 2022**

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bangalore. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government Stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website: www.rbi.org.in

Sd/-
(Dr. P.C. Jaffer), Secretary to Government (Exp)
Finance Department

DIPR/CP/3662/MAA/22-23

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MUNAZIRA Begum d/O Anwar Shariff born on 28/05/1989 residing at 37,1st cross basavanapura main road behind Vijaya bank kr puram bangalore –36, have changed my name to Farheen Firdose vide affidavit dated 5/11/2022 sworn before notary s Ramesh at Bangalore

I, SANIYA Afreen Khan residing at No.383, 3rd Main, 4th Cross, Vyalikaval, Palace Guttahalli, Bangalore-560003 have entered my different name in Old Passport Saniya Afreen my actual correct name is Saniya Afreen Khan vide Affidavit dated.22-12-2022 sworn before Notary M. Venkataraman, Bangalore.

I, MANJULA, R/o No.6, Ranoji Rao Lane, Kalasipalyam, Bangalore-560002, have changed my name from Manjula to Manjula Shivapuram Raghavendra vide affidavit dated 22-12-2022 before Notary G. Hemalatha, Bangalore.

BEFORE HON'BLE CITY CIVIL AND SESSIONS COURT AT BENGALURU
P & SC NO. 681/2022

BETWEEN : 1. MR. GAUTAM DEV NAIR, S/o- Shankaran Mahadevan Nair, Aged about 58 years, Residing at No. 99/1, 3rd A Cross, Inner Circle, Whitefield, Bengaluru – 560066.
2. REAR ADMIRAL ARJUN DEV NAIR, S/o- Shankaran Mahadevan Nair, Aged about 54 years, Residing at C-2/48, Bapanagar, New Delhi – 100001. ...PETITIONERS
AND: NIL ...RESPONDENTS

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that a petition has been made to this Court under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, praying for grant of succession certificate in respect of securities held in the form of equity shares and balance in bank account of **Late Shankaran Mahadevan Nair who died on 23.01.2020.**

Be it known that no caveat has been entered and the petition is posted for hearing on 09-03-2022. All persons claiming to have any interest may appear before this Court on **09-03-2023 at 11.00 a.m.** either in person or through pleader, duly instructed, failing which the matter will be heard and determined as Ex-parte.

SCHEDULE OF SECURITIES
SCHEDULE -A
Equity shares in listed companies

Sl. No.	ISIN code	Scrip name	account Description	Balance
1.	INE286A01017	DSQ Software Limited -EQ	Beneficiary	250
2.	INE129A01019	Gail (India) Limited -EQ	Beneficiary	400
3.	INE040A01034	HDFC Bank Limited -EQ New FV RE. 1/-	Beneficiary	100
4.	INE158A01026	Hero Motocorp Limited - EQ FV RS 2	Beneficiary	100
5.	INE030A01027	Hindustan unilever Limited - EQ FV RS.1	Beneficiary	1000
6.	INE009A01021	Infosys Limited - EQ FV RS 5	Beneficiary	200
7.	INE154A01025	ITC Limited - EQ New FV RE .1/-	Beneficiary	750
8.	INE018A01030	Larsen and Toubro Limited - EQ New FV RS.2/-	Beneficiary	150
9.	INE326A01037	Lupin Limited - EQ New FV RS.2/-	Beneficiary	100
10.	INE196A01026	Marico Limited - New EQ RE .1	Beneficiary	500
11.	INE018I01017	Mindtree Limited - EQ	Beneficiary	500
12.	INF204KB17I5	Nippon India Mutual Fund-ETF Gold Be ES	Beneficiary	17.2
13.	INE213A01029	Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited - EQ New F.V RS.5/-	Beneficiary	750
14.	INE044A01036	Sun PharmaceuticalIndustries Limited - EQ New F.V RE.1/-	Beneficiary	100
15.	INE092A01019	Tata Chemicals Limited -EQ	Beneficiary	300
16.	INE467B01029	Tata Consultancy Services Limited-EQ New FV RE.1/-	Beneficiary	100
17.	INE192A01025	Tata Consumer ProductsLimited-EQ New F.V. RE.1/-	Beneficiary	342
18.	INE081A01012	Tata Steel Limited - EQ	Beneficiary	2350
19.	IN9081A01010	Tata Steel Limited - EQPP RS. 2.504/-	Beneficiary	160
20.	INE053A01029	The Indian Hotels Company Limited - EQ New FV RE. 1/-	Beneficiary	1200
21.	INE245A01021	The Tata Power Company Limited - EQ New FV RE.1/-	Beneficiary	2000
22.	INE205A01025	Vedanta Limited - EQ New RS.1/-	Beneficiary	200
23.	INE075A01022	Wipro Limited - EQ F.V. RS. 2	Beneficiary	300

SCHEDULE -B
Bank Accounts

Sl.No.	Bank Account	Branch	Account Number	Account Type
1.	SBI	ITPL Campus, Bangalore	00000030739325303	Savings
2.	SBI	Muvattupuzha, Kerala	00000038084379339	Savings
3.	SBI	Muvattupuzha, Kerala	00000038611156089	Fixed Deposit
4.	SBI	White Field, Bangalore	00000054024499238	Savings
5.	Kotak Mahindra Bank	Giddens Layout Branch, Whitefield Main Road, Bangalore	201010032580	Savings

Given under my hand and seal of this Court dated **14th of December 2022, at Bengaluru.**

Lt Cdr Avinash Sabarad (Retd.)
***DharmSthan Legal,* Advocates**
No. 619, 4th Main,10th A Cross, Near Rajajinagar Metro Station, Mahalakshimipuram, Chord Road, Bengaluru. 560 086.

By Order of the Court,
Assistant Registrar
City Civil Court, Bangalore.

READER'S MAIL

Traffic lights

Sir, - Special Commissioner of Traffic M.A. Saleem has said more traffic lights would be installed in newly added areas. What is also needed is to relook at existing signals in all the areas and either remove them or reduce the timing. The signal at the junction of Bull Temple Road and Bugle Rock Road in Basavanagidi is on 24/7. There is hardly any traffic in the morning and night hours. Similarly, at the Ramakrisna Ashram, there are signals at a distance of about 50 ft. These are just two examples. Also, there needs to be more sophisticated cameras at all signals to catch violators.

G. Padmanabhan,
Bengaluru

Felling of trees

Sir, - Forty full-grown, decades-old trees in Malleswaram will be felled in the name of development. The BBMP has revived the controversial project of widening the 1.1-km road between Bhashyam Circle and Malleswaram 18th Cross. Simultaneously, it plans to build a 560-metre-long, four-lane flyover along the busy arterial road that links central and northern Bengaluru with 7.5m carriageways on either side of the median. While residents have opposed the tree-felling, environmental experts have warned that it will weaken the tankbund besides triggering an ecological disaster.

N.J. Ravi Chander,
Bengaluru

(Readers can write to letters.bangalore @thehindu.co.in)

Two rowdy-sheeters shot in leg on city outskirts; apprehended

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Two rowdy-sheeters, including one who had allegedly recently assaulted a police constable, were shot in the leg and apprehended on the city's outskirts in Jigani and Anekal on December 25, Sunday.

Varun Kumar, 25, and Kishore of Dinnur village, Anekal, had on December 22 assaulted police constable, Ranganath, attached to Anekal police station when he objected to them drinking and creating a ruckus on the road. Ranganath suffered severe injuries and is being treated at a hospital.

The police said that on Sunday morning, acting on a tip-off that the accused were in Kallubalu village in Anekal, they raided the place, and when they tried to apprehend them, Varun Kumar assaulted another constable, Shankar Siddpura, forcing the police to shoot in his leg in self-defence and later apprehend him.

He is presently being treated at Victoria Hospital. There are 14 cases, including a murder, 5 attempt to murder, and two dacoity cases against Varun Kumar, and he was at large, wanted in multiple cases.

In another case, Jigani police fired at the leg of another rowdy sheeter Ajay, wanted for a series of dacoities and kidnapping in Bannerghatta and Jigani areas recently, and apprehended him on Sunday morning.

Following a spate of robberies and a kidnapping, Jigani and Bannerghatta police had formed special teams to track down rowdy sheeters Krishna and Ajay, who, investigations pointed out, were behind these crimes. Acting on a tip-off that the duo were in Singasandra, Jigani police on night patrol rushed there and successfully apprehended Krishna, but Ajay fled on his scooter only to be sighted again in Haragadde village in some hours.

When the police tried to apprehend him, he allegedly tried to assault the police with a dagger he had and did not surrender even after a warning shot in the air, forcing police to fire at his leg and arrest him, the police said. Ajay has over 23 cases including theft, robbery and kidnappings registered against him.

CACHE

GETTY IMAGES

'Dark patterns' on the Internet: how companies are tricking their users

What are dark patterns on the Internet and how are users getting affected by it? How are Big Tech firms using this to downgrade the user experience? What do Internet users lose due to these unethical interface designs?

Sahana Venugopal

The story so far:

Some Internet-based firms have been tricking users into agreeing to certain conditions or clicking a few links. The unsuspecting users would not have accepted to such terms or clicked urls (uniform resource locator), but for the deceptive tactics deployed by tech firms. Such acceptances and clicks are flooding inboxes of the users with promotional emails they never wanted, making it hard to unsubscribe or request deletion. These are examples of "dark patterns," also known as "deceptive patterns."

What are dark patterns?

Such patterns are unethical user interface designs that deliberately make your Internet experience harder or even exploit you. In turn, they benefit the company or platform employing the designs.

By using dark patterns, digital platforms take away a user's right to full information about the services they are using and their control over their browsing experience.

The term is credited to UI/UX (user interface/user experience) researcher and designer Harry Brignull, who has been working to catalogue such patterns and the companies using them since around 2010.

How do companies use dark patterns?

Social media companies and Big Tech firms such as Apple, Amazon, Skype, Facebook, LinkedIn, Microsoft, and Google use dark or deceptive patterns to downgrade the user experience to their advantage.

Amazon came under fire in the EU for its confusing, multi-step cancelling process in Amazon Prime subscription. After communicating with consumer regulators, Amazon this year made its cancellation process easier for online customers in European countries.

In social media, LinkedIn users often receive unsolicited, sponsored messages from influencers. Disabling this option is a difficult process with multiple steps that requires users to be familiar with the platform controls.

As Meta-owned Instagram pivots to video-based content to compete against TikTok, users have complained that they are being shown suggested posts they did not wish to see and that they were unable to permanently set preferences.

Another dark pattern on the application is sponsored video ads getting scattered between reels and stories users originally opted to view, tricking them for several seconds before they can see the small "sponsored" label.

Google-owned YouTube nags users to sign up for YouTube Premium with pop-ups, obscuring final seconds of a video with thumbnails of other videos – a way of disrupting what should have been an otherwise smooth user experience.

What do users stand to lose because of dark patterns?

Dark patterns endanger the experience of Internet users and make them more vulnerable to financial and data exploitation by Big Tech firms. Dark patterns confuse users, introduce online obstacles, make simple tasks time-consuming, have users sign up for unwanted services/products, and force them to pay more money or share more personal information than they intended.

In the U.S., the Federal Trade Commission [FTC] has taken note of dark patterns and the risks they pose. In a report released in September this year, the regulatory body listed over 30 dark patterns, many of which are considered standard practice across social media platforms and e-commerce sites.

These include "baseless" countdowns for online deals, conditions in fine print that add on to costs, making cancellation buttons hard to see or click, making ads appear as news reports or celebrity endorsements, auto-playing videos, forcing users to create accounts to finish a transaction, silently charging credit cards after free trials end, and using dull colours to hide information that users should know about.

In one instance, the FTC report outlined its legal action against Amazon in 2014, for a supposedly "free" children's app that fooled its young users into making in-app purchases that their parents had to pay for.

"Once the account holder downloaded the app and children began playing the game, unbeknownst to the account holder, kids could rack up multiple charges, ranging from $0.99 to $99.99 each, by tapping buttons, with no account holder involvement. These purchases were disguised as play," stated the release.

The case was settled after Amazon agreed to refund over $70 million.

However, dark and deceptive patterns don't just stop with laptops and smartphones. The FTC report has warned that as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) platforms and devices grow in usage, dark patterns will likely follow users to these new channels as well.

Internet users who are able to identify and recognise dark patterns in their daily lives can choose more user-friendly platforms that will respect their right to choose and privacy.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

A quiz on events and personalities connected with December 26

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Why is Boxing Day, usually observed on December 26, so called?

QUESTION 2
December 26 is the second day of Christmas. According to the popular song 'Twelve Days of Christmas', what did the true love send?

QUESTION 3
This world-famous South African bishop, an anti-apartheid and human rights activist, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, passed away on December 26, 2021. Name him.

QUESTION 4
Traditionally, the Test match played at which famous cricket ground is dubbed the 'Boxing Day' Test?

QUESTION 5
Earlier this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that December 26 shall henceforth be marked as 'Veer Baal Diwas' to pay homage to the courage of the four sons of which Sikh Guru?

QUESTION 6
In 2004, the Boxing Day Tsunami killed an estimated 227,898 people in 14 countries. Near which place was the epicentre of the massive earthquake that caused the destruction?

QUESTION 7
On this date in 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union gathered to make which momentous announcement?

Visual question:
The country from where Tadej Pogacar, the winner of the Tour de France in 2020 and 2021, comes is celebrating its independence today. Name it. AFP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Kisan Diwas is celebrated on the birth anniversary of a former Indian Prime Minister. Name the Prime Minister. **Ans: Chaudhary Charan Singh**
2. Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 is a cross between two varieties of mustards. Name them. **Ans: Varuna and Early Heera-2**
3. Name the State and its ruling party which had a tussle with the Union government over procurement of paddy. **Ans: Telangana, Bharat Rashtra Samithi**
4. The government banned the export of this commodity in September. Name it. **Ans: Broken rice**
5. Name the proposal against which the residents in Ekanapuram are protesting against. **Ans: The construction of a second Airport in Chennai**
Visual: Name the film. **Ans: Kadaisi Vivasayi**
Early Birds: Rutherson Seeni | Sandeep Bura | K.N. Viswanathan

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

He is a rebel who will fight those in power

The old clock in the dining room has gone haywire

S. Upendran

Why do we say, 'The young man went haywire'? (Amit, Kolkata)
The expression 'go haywire' is mostly used in American English in informal contexts. When a person begins to behave in an eccentric or odd manner, he can be said to have gone haywire. The change in behaviour usually happens suddenly.

When the boss informed Sharada that her proposal had been turned down, she went haywire.

Harish will go haywire if he doesn't get the loan.

The expression can be used with things as well. When you say that your scooter has gone haywire, what you are suggesting is that the vehicle is behaving erratically, and it is causing you a lot of problems. Perhaps it is not starting at all – or it could be that the engine keeps switching off while you are driving.

The old clock in the dining room has gone haywire. You need to replace it.

Several theories have been put forward regarding the origin of this expression. One of them is the following. A 'haywire' is a strong, thin piece of wire that farmers generally use to tie bundles of hay together. The wire is wrapped around every bundle very tightly; so much so, when it is cut, the wire behaves in an unpredictable manner. Sometimes, the wire springs back at the person cutting it, and in the process, injures him.

What is the difference between 'malcontent' and 'unhappy'? (J. Harini, Chennai)
Both individuals have complaints about the situation they are in. They find fault with the things happening around them. An 'unhappy individual' may choose not to talk about the cause of his unhappiness. He may keep his thoughts to himself, and may do nothing to change the situation that he is in. A 'malcontent', on the other hand, will not keep quiet. He not only complains about the situation he finds himself in, he also tells you what he is going to do to solve the problem. A malcontent is a man of action; he is a rebel who is willing to fight those in power. While an unhappy individual focuses on personal problems, a malcontent focuses on the problems he sees in the society we live in, it could be social or political injustice. Unlike an unhappy individual, he wishes to bring about change; not necessarily, by peaceful means. He is someone who is very difficult to deal with.

Several malcontents with protest signs were seen shouting outside the VC's office.

Is it okay to say, 'While climbing, I had a difficulty in breathing'? (R Niranjana, Kochi)
No, it is not. You usually have 'difficulty (in) doing something'. You do not have 'a difficulty'. The 'a' is usually dropped in such sentences.

The children had difficulty in understanding what the teacher was saying.

"A newspaper is a device for making the ignorant more ignorant, and the crazy, crazier."
-H.L. Mencken

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Acquiescent:
willing to accept something without protest

Synonyms: compliant, willing, agreeable

Usage: *Defeated in the battle, the losing side was acquiescent and agreed to all demands without objection*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/3BOVFsc

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

BBMP to introduce bill discounting scheme for beleaguered contractors

Under the scheme, the BBMP will partner with a public sector bank. The contractor can draw the bill amount from the bank utmost a year ahead, paying the interest for the said period. Currently, BBMP has pending bills to the tune of ₹2,700 crore, a backlog of over two years

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

The civic body has sought a loan of ₹600 crore from the State government towards clearing some of the pending bills. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

To provide relief to contractors who have been waiting for at least two years to get their bills cleared, the civic body has decided to introduce a bill discounting scheme for a period of up to one year.

Under the scheme, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) will partner with a public sector bank. The contractor can draw the bill amount from the bank utmost a year ahead, paying the interest for the said period.

The BBMP, when it clears the bill eventually, will credit it to the bank, explained Jayaram Raipura, Special Commissioner (Finance), BBMP. "We will soon call a tender for selecting the banking partner and the interest rate will be very competitive," he said, adding that going by the current market trends, it would be around 7%.

Presently, the BBMP has pending bills of up to ₹2,700 crore, a backlog of over two years. The civic body has sought a loan of ₹600 crore from the State government towards clearing some of these bills immediately and the proposal is yet to be cleared by the Finance Department.

Under the given context, contractors have been cautious to welcome the bill discounting scheme. "There have been multiple instances of contractors caught in debt traps ending lives, amidst 40% kickbacks, and long delays in bills being cleared. For those who are caught in debt traps, the scheme does provide some breather, comparing the higher rate of interest elsewhere in the market, and they will definitely avail it. But the situation is so pathetic that we are happy at a scheme that imposes an additional 7% cost to the contractors, on top of the 40% kickback we are being forced to shell out despite our vocal protests," said R. Ambikapathy, president, BBMP Contractors' Association.

G.M. Ravindra, general secretary of the association, said that ideally the palike had to bear the interest since they had delayed clearing the bills, but the contractors were now ready to pay the interest for six months and not for any longer.

"The devil is in the details. We want a tripartite agreement between the civic body, the contractor opting for the scheme, and the bank, with a clear clause that the contractor will pay an interest of six months and draw the bill amount and if the civic body fails to pay the bank within six months, the interest that will be levied on the transaction after that will have to be borne by the civic body," he said.

INBRIEF

Woman found dead at her apartment in Talaghattapura

A woman fell to her death from the 19th floor of the apartment she lived in on Sunday. The deceased has been identified as Charisma Singh, 40. She fell to her death from the 19th floor of Purva Highland Apartments at Talaghattapura. Residents who saw her fall, rushed her immediately to a private hospital where she was declared brought dead. The police said that preliminary investigations had revealed that the deceased was suffering from a few health complications and was under treatment. However, what drove her to take the extreme step is yet to be ascertained. Talaghattapura police have taken up a case.

(Those in distress or having suicidal tendencies can call Arogya Sahayavani Ph.: 104 for help)

'Scouts and guides build character, promote humanity'

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Sunday that the scouts and guides built character among students and promoted humanity.

Speaking at the 25th International Cultural Jamboree of the Scouts and Guides on the premises of Alva's Education Institutes at Moodbidri, he said that the youth of today in the country are in confusion over understanding the culture and civilisation due to the Western influence. In such a situation, the activities of the scouts and guides helped in understanding the culture and civilisation of India. He said that though all religions preached and stressed on maintaining peace, terrorist activities, violence are taking place in the name of religion. Armed forces alone cannot contain terrorist activities. It needed change in the attitude and mindset to uphold humanity. A cultural revolution is required to change the violent mindset.

Text & Context
A weekday feature on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and a quiz. In the latest issue (December 26, Monday), the following explainer is available:

- The emerging Omicron sublineages across the world **bit.ly/omicronsublineages**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access this article. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access the article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

Holiday season spurs travel boom; city hotels see uptick in bookings

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

This year, the State government has allowed New Year celebrations on Brigade Road after a gap of two years. FILE PHOTO

Business at hotels across the city is booming this December as there is a surge in domestic travel and destination weddings. Most hotels in the city centre, including five-star hotels, are running on 100% occupancy with some also diverting their guests to other hotels to keep up with demand. With the upcoming New Year's Day events and Aero India in February, the streak is expected to continue.

Tourists from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and other neighbouring States are arriving in large numbers this year, the hoteliers reported.

"Not just 100% occupancy, but there is also minus occupancy, which means that hotels divert the guests to other hotels they have tie-ups with when they are overbooked. This was a common occurrence during December in the pre-pandemic days and now it has resumed again," said P.C. Rao, president, Bruhat Bengaluru Hoteliers' Association (BBHA).

Mr. Rao added that many non-resident Indians (NRI) are also travelling back to their native States this year and when they do, they are also staying at other cities on small tours. "This has led to a surge in bookings in hotels in most major cities," he added. With more wedding venues coming up in Bengaluru, wedding parties have also booked hotels in large numbers, many hoteliers said. "Destination weddings have become a means of uniting all the family members and then there are also events like haldi, mehendi for which we see bookings. The hotels on the outskirts do not have 100% occupancy, but we saw quite a surge during the first fortnight of this month. Come February, the room costs at many hotels in North Bengaluru will increase due to Aero India," said Sunil, General Manager at Attide Hotel.

The hospitality industry, which was awaiting large-scale revival post the pandemic, has been very happy with this year's holiday business. "We were the first to close and last to open during the 19 lockdowns and now we are slowly seeing rays of hopes again in the industry," said a hotelier from J.P. Nagar.

Festive spirit

A large number of devotees visited St. Mary's Basilica church in Bengaluru for Christmas celebrations on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, DEC. 26	
RISE 06:39	SET 18:01
RISE 09:31	SET 21:18
TUESDAY, DEC. 27	
RISE 06:39	SET 18:02
RISE 10:22	SET 22:18
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 28	
RISE 06:40	SET 18:02
RISE 11:08	SET 23:14

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	28	22
Mysuru	30	13
Bengaluru	24	18

Bengaluru Today
27°C Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm & humid. Chances of light rain & thundershower at some places.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
27°C The weather will be comfortable but humid. Night will be cool. Chances of light rain and thundershower at some places.

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Three arrested for cheating contractor

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The city police busted a gang of three men who had cheated a contractor of ₹27 lakh giving him counterfeit currency of ₹1 crore face value.

The arrested have been identified as Mannashravana, 35, Vishnu Rajan, 26 and Praveen Kumar, 40, all residents of the city. Police are now probing the source of the counterfeit currency.

Parthasarathy N., a contractor had taken a loan of ₹1.75 crore from a private bank which he was not able to repay and had turned into a Non Performing Asset.

Learning of this, the gang approached Parthasarathy offering him a cheap loan of a huge amount of ₹13 crore for a discount of 5%.

They demanded 2% of it towards stamp duty for the agreement and collected ₹27 lakh from him, and delivered ₹1 crore in counterfeit currency as the first installment of the loan.

APPOINTMENT

राष्ट्रीयप्रौद्योगिकीसंस्थानपुदुच्चेरी
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY PUDUCHERRY
(An Institute of National Importance under the MoE, Govt. of India)
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From Page One

Reddy launches party; to contest polls

Mr. Reddy said he was severing his ties of over two decades with the saffron party. Incidentally, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said at the time of the 2018 Assembly elections that the BJP had nothing to do with Mr. Reddy. "Had the party used me fully, it would have got 134 seats instead of 104," Mr. Reddy said while making known his displeasure about the snubs despite his work for the party since the 1999 general elections when senior BJP leader late Sushma Swaraj unsuccessfully contested against Congress leader Sonia Gandhi from Ballari.

The former Minister, who has been fighting a slew of cases filed against him for alleged illegal mining activities, said, "I had been trapped in a political conspiracy and the launch of the new party was to get out of the trap." Indirectly attacking BJP leaders, he said, "I am being targeted by my own people." Recalling troubled times after his arrest, he said, "Only (former Chief Ministers) B.S. Yediyurappa and Jagadish Shettar had lent moral support to my wife and children."

INBRIEF

Appointment letters handed over to 10,000 youths

Appointment letters were handed over to 10,000 youths on Sunday during the celebration of the former Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary as Good Governance Day in Bengaluru.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai symbolically handed over the appointment letters to eight recruits. In this initiative of the State Skill Development Department, job aspirants have been facilitated to get employment with a salary ranging from ₹18,000 to ₹45,000, according to a release from the department. The recruits include BSc, BCom, nursing, diploma, and polytechnic graduates. The event was held in the presence of Skill Development Minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan at Sree Kanteerava indoor stadium in Bengaluru. Mr. Bommai said that no other State in the country except Karnataka had an employment policy. Besides, the State also had an R&D policy to promote research and generate employment opportunities.

Nandini sweets at 20% discount during 'Sihi Utsava'

The Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) has provided milk and milk products under the brand Nandini for over 50 years. To create brand awareness about Nandini sweets, Nandini managing director B.C. Sathish recently launched the Nandini Sihi Utsava scheme where consumers can buy 19 sweets at a 20% discount.

The discount is on offer for consumers in Karnataka for 30 days.

Speculation rife as to who in KK region will benefit from Reddy's new party

Development comes months ahead of Assembly polls; without the backing of B. Sriramulu, the new party might find its going tough in the region

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With just a few months left for the Assembly elections in Karnataka, the launch of a new party by the former Minister G. Janardhana Reddy on Sunday – Kalyana Rajya Pragathi Paksha – is lending itself to varied interpretations in political circles on the possible impact on the polls. The BJP believes that it will not dent the party's prospects, but some political observers argue it might divide BJP votes to help the Congress mostly and the Janata Dal (Secular) in a few pockets in the Kalyana Karnataka region.

While it was widely expected that his long-time aide and Transport Minister B. Sriramulu could support Mr. Reddy, it is now turning out that he may not join the new outfit. Without the caste backing that Mr. Sriramulu would bring – that of Valmikis (or Nayakas) – the party could find the electoral battle tough. On Sunday, Mr. Reddy, accused in illegal mining cases, said he would not "misuse" his personal equations to prevail upon either his brothers or Mr. Sriramulu to join his party.

The former Minister Gali Janardhana Reddy addressing the media in Bengaluru on Sunday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

"Mr. Sriramulu has already wished his friend well in any new venture, indicating he will not move with him. We are confident that neither will Mr. Reddy's brothers G. Karunakara Reddy (BJP MLA for Harappanahalli) and G. Somashekhara Reddy (BJP MLA for Ballari City) switch sides. The new party will have little impact on the BJP even in Ballari district," said N. Ravikumar, general secretary, BJP Karnataka. He, however, said as the elections approach, it needs to be seen how the party's prospects will pan out. "The party's fortunes will depend on what kind of local leadership it attracts. Disgruntled elements from across parties may find it a welcoming platform. We need to see how it shapes up," Mr. Ravikumar said.

Sriramulu factor

Sources in the BJP said that Mr. Sriramulu, the strongman of Valmiki community, a key electoral ally of the BJP in the State, has been upset at the way he has been treated over the last five years and had been contemplating switching sides. Though he was promised the Deputy Chief Minister's post and B.S. Yediyurappa had even announced it publicly in the run-up to the 2018 Assembly polls, he was not given the post. He was even snubbed publicly when he was stripped of the Health and Family Welfare portfolio during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"But now that the BJP government has hiked reservation for the Scheduled Tribes to 7% from 3%, mainly benefitting the Valmiki community, Mr. Sriramulu has emerged as an even taller leader in the community and hence will not be able to leave the party," a senior party strategist said.

According to a senior JD (S) leader, without Mr. Sriramulu, the new party may not be able to gather mass support as Valmikis are in good numbers in Ballari, Chitradurga, Tumakuru, Yadgir, and Koppal districts. "However, Mr. Reddy has money power that can swing votes in his favour and divide the BJP base. In such a scenario, the JD(S) could benefit in some pockets and the Congress could benefit in several constituencies at the cost of the BJP." He pointed out that during the last moments before elections, there have been several examples where money overrides caste and other considerations.

'BJP a divided house'

Congress leader Priyank Kharge said that the new party shows that the BJP is a divided house. However, he added, "We need to be careful because the new party like the KJP or the BSR party in the past could suddenly don the secular mask or even start talking about the idea of India or our Constitution." He said the new party could result in "marginal loss" of votes to the BJP.

There is speculation that the new outfit would be supported by the YSR Congress of Andhra Pradesh.

OBC federation to approach court if Panchamasalis get reservation under 2A category

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

The Karnataka State OBC Welfare Association and the Karnataka State Federation of Backward Class Communities have threatened to approach the court against the State government if it were to include Panchamasalis under 2A category of the OBC reservation matrix.

K.M. Ramachandrappa, president of the federation, told reporters in Bagalkot on Sunday that the federation and other organisations were strongly opposed to the planned move. If Panchamasalis, who are already in the 3B category, are included in 2A, there would be unfair competition between them and other deprived communities who truly deserve to be in the group, he said.

"We will first urge the State government not to yield to the demand of the Panchamasali community. If they don't listen to us, we will have no other option but to approach the court,'' he said. "We will meet the Chief Minister in Belagavi on Monday to express our reservations. We will urge him not to yield to such political pressures. We will also warn him of the dangers of opening Pandora's box that could lead to multiple communities asking for similar benefits,'' he added.

'Largest landowners'

He said that Panchamasalis are the largest landowners in the villages. "They are addressed as Gowda, Jagirdar, and Dhani and other similar terms. How can they be clubbed together with backward communities like barbers and other landless vocational castes, in the same group?" he sought to know.

Mr. Ramachandrappa held a meeting of leaders of various backward communities, in Bagalkot on Sunday and in Vijayapura on Saturday. In the meeting, he said that granting 2A status to Panchamaslis was "not acceptable on technical and moral grounds".

"Technically, it is not tenable as it has come as a result of an agitation and arm-twisting tactics by a politically powerful community and not the result of a scientific study of the permanent backward commission. Secondly, the State government has limited powers to legislate on such issues as the 102nd constitutional amendment stipulates that Parliament has to pass a law based on such recommendations from the Centre. Panchamasali leaders have claimed that the State government has assured them of including them in the 2A category. This fails the test of reasonable classification mandated by the Constitution, as Panchamasalis are neither socially nor educationally backward, nor are they as deprived as the other 102 communities presently in the 2A category," he said.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

MLA advised to set up industry

The ongoing legislature session in Belagavi has had some MLAs of Belagavi and Bidar districts demanding the government's support for attracting investments, but Large and Medium Scale Industries Minister Murugesh Nirani *(in picture)* seems to think

that MLAs themselves turning industrialists is a better idea.

When Abhay Kumar Patil (BJP) demanded that the Minister take proactive steps for attracting investors to Belagavi to set up major industries and provide jobs to youth, Bandeppa Kashempur of the BJP pointed out that ginger crop is being grown in vast tracts of land in Bidar but there are no processing units.

Mr. Nirani, himself an industrialist, told Mr. Kashempur without batting an eyelid, "You are an industrialist. Why can't you set up an industry for processing the ginger crop? The government will provide all concessions and subsidies." Mr. Kashempur did not appear particularly enthused by this "solution".

When Opposition batted for Minister

The Legislative Council proceedings in the Suvarna Soudha last week witnessed a curious spectacle of Opposition members trooping into the well of the Legislative Council in protest against the Chair's refusal to give a Minister an opportunity to speak during a discussion on sugarcane growers' woes.

Though the snubbed Minister in question – Large and Medium Scale Industries Minister Murugesh Nirani – sat down trying to camouflage his hurt, JD(S) member Marithibbe Gowda questioned the then pro tem Chairman Raghunatha Rao Malkhapure's decision and demanded that he be allowed to speak.

When Mr. Malkhapure refused, Mr. Gowda promptly entered the well of the House. Soon, other members of the Opposition, including some Congress members, too joined him.

With the Opposition becoming adamant on the demand, the ruling party members suspected that their own Minister's statement could be inimical to their goverment's interests and argued that he should not be allowed to speak.

Mr. Nirani's efforts to speak in the House were preceded by the former Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Laxman Savadi's intervention to cite an instance of exploitation of sugarcane labourers that strengthened the Opposition's arguments. Eventually, Mr. Malkhapure gave in to the Opposition's demand and allowed Mr. Nirani to speak. When Mr. Nirani, who is also an owner of sugar mills, denied the Opposition charges of under-weighing, he not only disproved the fears of the ruling party but also dashed the hopes of the Opposition.

Nagesh Prabhu
Laiqh Ahmed Khan

Let there be a judicial probe, we will give evidence to back our claims: Kempanna

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

D. Kempanna, president of the Karnataka State Contractors' Association, who was arrested and released on bail on Saturday in connection with a criminal defamation case filed by Minister Munirathna over allegations of corruption, on Sunday alleged that his arrest was "a misuse of power by the Minister and the State government".

"They have the police power and they have used it to harass us in an attempt to suppress our voices. The warrant issued by the court had to be executed by the next date of hearing, which was January 19, by which time we would have appeared before the court ourselves. But like they were arresting some hardened criminals, the police visited not only our houses but also the residences of many of our relatives, harassing them too asking for us. But the police treated us well. It was obvious that they were under instructions," Mr. Kempanna told *The Hindu* .

Mr. Kempanna also contended that the civil defamation and criminal defamation case filed by Mr. Munirathna claimed they had not been able to provide any evidence to back their allegations. "We have written to the Chief Minister, met him personally and even through public forums demanded that a judicial probe be instituted into the 40% commission allegations we have made. If there is a judicial probe instituted even today, we have the evidence to back our claims and will submit them for inquiry," he said.

RMS jubilee

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

Rashtriya Military School, Belgaum, celebrated its platinum jubilee here on December 23 and 24. It was presided over by Deputy Chief of the Army Staff Lt. Gen. Ravin Khosla.

A commemorative special cover by India Post was released on the occasion.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client is intending to purchase the Schedule Property which is morefully described hereunder from its owners **R. Krishna Murthy** S/o late H. Ramaiah and all his family members, residing at Kote Beedi, Ward No. 8, Devanahalli Town, Bangalore Rural District. If any body has got any right, title and interest or claim over the Schedule Property either in full or part may file their objections to the undersigned within 14 days from the publication of notice hereof, where after no such claims will be entertained and my client will proceed with the purchase of the said property.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY : SY. NO. 61/5

All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Sy. No. 61/5, measuring 1 Acre, (portion of old Sy. No. 61/2) situated at Dasarahalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Devanahalli Taluk, Bangalore Rural District, and bounded on the, **East by:** Property of Mr. Tanveer Ahmed in Sy. No..61/3; **West by :** Property of Mr. Tanveer Ahmed in Sy. No. 60; **North by :** Property of Mr. Tanveer Ahmed in Sy..No..61/4; **South by :** Property of Mr. L. Prakash in Sy. No. 61/6.

Sd/- Nagesh A., Advocate
No. G-10, Mazzanine Floor, SNS Chambers, No. 239, Sankey Road, Sadashivanagar, Bangalore – 560080.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mrs. S.P. KUMUDA W/o R. VIJAY KUMAR Residing at No 9/3, 11th Cross road, Kempapura Agrahara, Magadi Road, Bangalore-560023, intends to purchase the Residential Property from its lawful owner, **Sri B. SHRUTHI W/o Late BABU .R**, No. 5/4, Ward No. 122/32, PID 32-9-5/4, C Street, 10th Cross Road, Kempapura Agrahara, Magadi Road, Bangalore-560023 which is morefully described in the Schedule hereunder and hereinafter referred to as Schedule Property. The general public is hereby informed that any persons having or asserting any right, title and interest or making any claim in respect of the Schedule Property may send their objections in writing with documentary proof to the undersigned within **Fifteen (15) Days** from the date of this publication. If no claim or objection is received within the stipulated time, it shall be presumed that no one is having any right, title, claim or interest over the schedule property and Mrs. S.P. KUMUDA will proceed with the completion of the sale in respect of the schedule property.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the Residential Property bearing No. 5/4, Ward No. 122/32, PID 32-9-5/4, C Street, 10th Cross Road, Kempapura Agrahara, Magadi Road, Bangalore-560023, measuring **East to West:** 13.04 Feet and **North to South:** 17 Feet, totally measuring 222 Square Feet along with existing building, coming within the limits of BBMP Ward No.122/32, Kempapura Agrahara, Magadi Road, Bangalore- 560023.

Contact:- **R. VIJAY KUMAR**, No 9/3, 11th Cross Road, Kempapura Agrahara, Magadi Road, Bangalore-560023, Ph.: **9890102004**.

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED

(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)

KPTCL invites bids vide the below mentioned bid enquiry Nos.

TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through e-Procurement Portal only)

No. SEE/T(W&M)/MYS/EEE(O)/AE-3/22-23/5249-51 Date: 23.12.2022

1) Bid Enquiry No. KPTCL/SEE/EEE(O)/AE-3/T(W&M)/MYS/ADDL/50 to Providing Additional 1X8 MVA, 66/11kV Garudanaukkada substation in Srirangapatna Taluk, Mandya District on Partial Turnkey basis.

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through e-Procurement Portal only)

No. SEE/T(W&M)/MYS/EEE(O)/AE-1/22-23/5292-95 Date: 23.12.2022

2) Bid Enquiry No. KPTCL/SEE/EEE(O)/AEE-1/T(W&M)/MYS/ADDL/27 to Providing Additional 1x12.5 MVA, 66/11KV Power Transformer along with necessary Switchgear at 66/11KV **Bookanakere** Sub-Station in K.R.Pet Taluk, Mandya District.

3) Bid Enquiry No. KPTCL/SEE/EEE(O)/AEE-1/T(W&M)/MYS/REPL/28 to Providing additional 1x12.5MVA 66/11kV Power Transformer at 66/11kV **Vaderahalli** Sub-Station in Nagamangala Taluk & Mandya Dist. on Partial Turnkey basis.

4) Bid Enquiry No. KPTCL/SEE/EEE(O)/AEE-1/T(W&M)/MYS/ADDL/43 to Providing Additional 1X8MVA 66/11kV Transformer at 66/11kv **Bhogadi** Sub-Station in Nagamangala Taluk & Mandya District on Partial Turnkey basis.

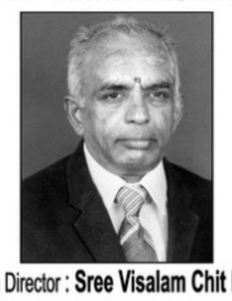
The details regarding participation in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website: **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink 'e-Procurement -KPTCL' or **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in** on or after for Sl. No. 1: **29.12.2022**. For Sl. No. 2 to 4: **28.12.2022.** Any other details can be had from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/- **Superintending Engineer, Elecl., Transmission (W&M) Circle, KPTCL, 1st Floor, Prasaraha Bhavan, N.R. Mohalla, Mysuru-570007. Ph: 0821-2455018.**

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

HOMAGE TO OUR BELOVED FOUNDER
Thiru. AR.RAMASWAMY CHETTIAR
43rd ANNIVERSARY



Born : **29.12.1924**
Expired : **26.12.1979**

Former Managing Director : **Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.,**
Former Director : **The Nellai Finance (P) Ltd.,**
Former Director : **Aruna Chemicals & Farms (P) Ltd.,**
Former Trustee : **Sree Visalam Charitable Trust**

IN MEMORIAM

"YOUR LIFE OUR INSPIRATION"

INSERTED BY

AR. Viswanathan Managing Director
AR. Meenakshi Director
AR. Umapathy Director

Family Members, Relatives, Friends and Employees of Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.,

INBRIEF

'Centre targeting me as I have exposed BJP's conspiracy'

BRS MLA from Tandur, Pilot Rohit Reddy, accused the Centre of targeting him and his family members, using the name of Enforcement Directorate (ED), as he exposed the BJP conspiracy of poaching party MLAs. "I am being targeted as I exposed the BJP conspiracy. The same is the reason for raids on party Ministers and MLAs by ED, CBI and IT departments. I feel the ED has been trying to increase pressure on me by filing cases," Mr. Rohit Reddy said.

Leopard walks into cage at university in Tirupati

The leopard that was on prowl at the Tirumala foothills walked into the trap laid on the campus of Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University in the early hours of Sunday. The animal walked into one of the two cages set up by the Forest Department in the area where it was sighted.

The higher officials in the Forest Department instructed the field staff to release the animal in the forest. The leopard was sighted several times in and around the SVVU campus around midnight.

Srimukhalingam temple may be added in UNESCO list

Naidugari Rajasekhar, the chief priest of Srimukhalingam temple in Andhra Pradesh, has urged the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to get the historic Siva temple included on the UNSECO's list of World Heritage Sites in order to get international recognition for the temple. Mr. Rajasekhar told the media here on Sunday that Srimukhalingam, which was also known as Kalinganagaram, was the capital of the early Eastern Ganga Dynasty.

Coimbatore blast case: NIA conducts field investigations

NIA Special Court at Poonamallee granted the NIA nine-day custody of five accused persons; they were interrogated for five days in Chennai

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

National Investigation Agency (NIA) officials on Sunday conducted field investigations at various places in Coimbatore after taking into custody five of the accused persons arrested in the October 23 car blast case. A day before Deepavali, a car exploded in front of the Sangameswarar temple at Kottaimedu. The suspected mastermind, Jameesha Mubin, 29, died in the blast.

The city police arrested six persons – Muhammad Thalha, 25; Muhammad Azharudheen, 23; Muhammad Riyas, 27; Firoz Ismail, 27; his brother Muhammad Nawaz Ismail, 25; and Afsar Khan, 28 – for their alleged involvement in the blast. The probe was later transferred to the NIA.

NIA officials interrogated the accused at G.M. Nagar on Sunday.
S. SIVA SARAVANAN

After the initial investigation, the NIA arrested three more persons – Mohammed Thoufeek, 25; Umar Faaruq, 39; and Ferose Khan, 28 – for having alleged links to the incident. All of them were lodged at Puzhal Central Prison. The NIA Special Court at Poonamallee in Chennai granted the NIA a nine-day custody of Muhammad Azharudheen, Afsar Khan, Firoz Ismail, Umar Faaruq, and Ferose Khan for investigation. After interrogations for five days in Chennai, the officials took them to Coimbatore and conducted field investigations at Ukkadam, G.M. Nagar, Al-Amin Colony, Pullukadu and Kottaimedu.

The accused will be produced in the court on December 29.

St. Mary's basilica wears a deserted look on Christmas with truce over Mass row

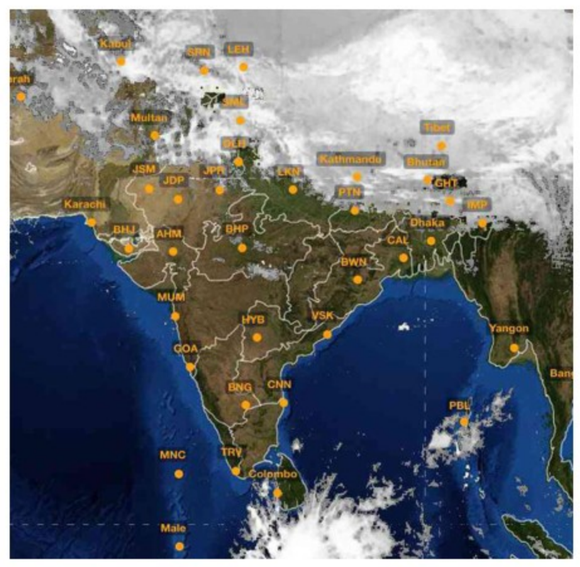
K.A. Martin
KOCHI

In a rare instance in its history, the St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica here wore a deserted look on Christmas eve and the morning of the festival. There was no celebration of Mass, including the midnight Mass, this time around after two groups in the Ernakulam Angamaly archdiocese called for a truce over their quarrel on the way the Mass is celebrated.

The civil administration had called a meeting of the two factions, one supporting the synodal Mass in which the priest faces away from the people in the second half of the Mass and the other in support of a fully people-facing Mass, on Saturday to reach a consensus. However, 11 priests, who were in support of a fully people-facing Mass, sustained injuries in incidents of fisticuffs over the issue on Friday and Saturday. The two factions, therefore, decided that there will be no Mass at the Basilica until a consensus is reached and permanent peace is brought about. Meanwhile, Major Archbishop Cardinal George Alencherry celebrated the Christmas Mass at St. Thomas Mount, which is the official headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church, while the priests celebrated the Mass at their respective parishes or institutions. Those supporting the fully people-facing Mass against the synodal diktat said the altar of the basilica should be reconsecrated for the Mass to be celebrated there again. They said there was sacrilege when the Synod supporters disrupted Mass on Friday and Saturday and upturned the altar. They also spilled consecrated wine and host, said senior priest and secretary of the priest's council in the archdiocese in a letter to the Pope seeking Rome's intervention on the matter.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over south coastal Tamil Nadu and south Kerala. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and hail likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya. Dense fog likely in isolated pockets of Haryana, Chandigarh and West Uttar Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	27.5	12.8	Kozhikode	—	33.2	22.6
Ahmedabad	—	25.8	12.6	Kurnool	—	32.4	19.3
Aizawl	—	—	8.5	Lucknow	—	25.4	10.0
Allahabad	—	25.6	12.6	Madurai	—	34.0	23.8
Bengaluru	—	24.4	18.4	Mangaluru	—	34.0	19.3
Bhopal	—	—	11.6	Mumbai	—	29.0	15.0
Bhubaneswar	—	31.0	15.0	Mysuru	—	30.0	12.6
Chandigarh	—	11.1	6.6	New Delhi	—	14.1	6.0
Chennai	27.0	28.7	24.2	Patna	—	24.5	15.4
Coimbatore	—	30.7	20.6	Port Blair	—	30.2	26.2
Dehradun	—	23.1	6.0	Puducherry	3.8	30.4	22.6
Gangtok	—	14.5	6.5	Pune	—	30.7	13.0
Goa	—	32.0	19.5	Raipur	—	30.8	16.0
Guwahati	—	26.0	13.9	Ranchi	—	28.6	16.0
Hubballi	—	31.0	19.0	Shillong	—	17.0	7.0
Hyderabad	—	29.8	17.3	Shimla	—	11.9	3.4
Imphal	—	22.5	6.7	Srinagar	—	7.6	-5.8
Jaipur	—	22.0	6.6	Thiruvananthapuram	—	31.5	23.6
Kochi	—	31.4	24.0	Tiruchi	—	27.1	25.0
Kohima	—	18.0	6.0	Vijayawada	—	30.4	19.5
Kolkata	—	30.0	16.5	Visakhapatnam	—	30.5	22.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.22	139	45	—	—	
Bengaluru	—	15	12	102	92	
Chennai	8	11	34	67	117	
Delhi	.14	21	27	330	386	
Hyderabad	2	54	38	164	145	
Kolkata	5	35	28	228	144	
Lucknow	.14	44	99	271	186	
Mumbai	.41	116	54	308	171	
Pune	—	—	—	—	—	
Visakhapatnam	.14	51	24	85	92	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Chhapra, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 418 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Nandesari, Gujarat recorded a healthy AQI score of 17

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

EDUCATIONPLUS

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Transforming lives

PRADAN's Development Apprenticeship Programme helps college students work at the grassroots level to solve local issues

Soma Basu
soma.basu@thehindu.co.in

When Barsha Mishra chose to live with a family in interior Jharkhand, she realised the privileges of her urban life. "The challenges of living frugally and staying away from family and friends was an eye-opener. Detached from the mainstream, I learnt to apply myself to local problems and address contextual issues," she says.

Today, a confident and aware Barsha works as a team coordinator at Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) to bring in more youngsters for the Development Apprenticeship Programme (DAP) that she undertook 13 years ago, as a Social Science student at Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

She is among the 5,000 students trained in the last four decades to strengthen the ability of the rural poor to earn better. Since 1990, PRADAN, a national support organisation to the government's flagship rural development programmes, has enabled youngsters from various academic fields such as Management, Engineering or Agriculture to Culture, History and Politics to work with 9,63,324 marginalised families across 9,127 remote villages of Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal.

Back in 1983, Deep Joshi and Vijay Mahajan started PRADAN with the conviction that rural India's endemic poverty could be solved if educated youngsters worked with weaker communities to empower them with the information required to improve their lives.

Inspiring a movement

The idea, over the years, has inspired a movement of young people passionate about tackling the pressing problems in villages, as PRADAN played a major role in developing programmes such as the as Integrated Rural Development Programme, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana and National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). "Giving back to society can be a fulfilling and viable vocation for educated youngsters. We groom them to work at the grassroots level and be empathetic towards the poor, something that needs to be at the forefront of the education system," says Narendranath Damodaran, Integrator at PRADAN.

"We try to impact the lives of villagers; it requires a lot of mental resilience," says Arnab Mitra, who was a PRADAN apprentice in 2014, working and coordinating with 1,200 women SHGs in Chattisgarh. "It helped me learn skills crucial to the social sector; to identify the gaps and facilitate existing government programmes to reach and benefit the rural poor. PRADAN is like an activist helping in the last-mile contact with a structured intervention."

> If we pull together, it is possible to continue to work for change that is sustainable and self-perpetuating

Bridging the disconnect

"We look at students who have the natural capability to work systematically towards a solution as a team and understand how the local governance functions," says Damodaran, "as this is the social innovation generation that can bring in skills and systems to help women, families and communities gain confidence and take charge of their own lives."

"India is overwhelmingly poor and the poverty is stark. If we pull together, it is possible to continue to work for change that is sustainable and self-perpetuating," believes Mitra, who, like many of his colleagues, is working to bridge the disconnect between the elites and the weakest, and make the marginalised aware of their entitlements as citizens, develop their own skills and initiatives and build a livelihood.

For more details, visit https://www.pradan.net/

HOW IT WORKS

PRADAN sources talent from 45 reputed academic partner institutions. Currently, it is in talks with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and Madurai Institute of Social Sciences; NIT Bengaluru and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad.

Two batches of 60 students are selected every year for the 12-month programme. The first week involves induction, followed by three months of immersion, i.e, learning-by-seeing while staying with a local family. The next eight months are for learning-by-doing and for perspective-building. Selected students get a stipend and, on completion, are offered an executive role in PRADAN.

How it helps

Young learners gain knowledge from practice through interaction with colleagues and others engaged in similar work. Working directly at the grassroots level gives them an understanding of the challenges, hardships, and enjoyment of contributing to improving lives. The field immersion of apprentices takes place in rural areas, while classroom sessions take place in Pradan's campuses in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Technip Energies India Scholarship Programme
Aims to help female students complete engineering courses.
Eligibility: Open for female students from Delhi NCR, Bihar, Assam, Rajasthan, Chennai and Mumbai (**NOTE**: Applications from Ghaziabad, Navi Mumbai, and Thane are also accepted) who are currently enrolled in the first-year of B.E./B.Tech. (Chemical, Electrical, Civil, and Mechanical Engineering) courses, and have scored 70% or more marks in Class 12. Annual family income must not be more than ₹4 lakhs from all sources.
Rewards: ₹30,000
Deadline: December 31
Application: Online b4s.in/plus/TSPSS1

Felix Scholarships, University of Oxford
Aims to provide financial assistance to underprivileged Indian students and offer exposure to academic study, cultures and experiences that would contribute to the culture and welfare of their home communities.
Eligibility: Open to Indian citizens holding an Bachelor's or Master's degree from an Indian university and willing to pursue a full-time Master's or D.Phil course. The applicant must not have studied the same course before.
Rewards: Full course fees and other benefits
Deadline: January 01, 2023
Application: Online b4s.in/plus/FUO01

Swami Dayanand Education Foundation Merit-cum-Means Scholarship
An initiative to provide financial assistance to students pursuing professional courses
Eligibility: Open to candidates pursuing professional courses including Engineering, Medical, Architecture, and other undergraduate courses in Government or private Institutes in India. They must have secured 65% or above in Class 12. Annual family income must be less than ₹6 lakhs per annum.
Rewards: Up to ₹50,000 per annum
Deadline: January 26, 2023
Application: Online b4s.in/plus/SDMCM4

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

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A welcome move

Centre's free food grain distribution in 2023 will provide relief to States

The Government has decided not to extend the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana, (PMGKY), a scheme that ran between April 2020 to December 2022 (except for a short period in between), and provided additional allocation of foodgrains, i.e., rice or wheat from the central pool at five kilograms a month free of cost to beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). PMGKY absorbed the shock of the pandemic for the extreme poor and also brought in political dividends for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in many States that had elections this year, including Uttar Pradesh in particular. While discontinuing the scheme, the Government has said that it will bear the expenses of food grains under the NFSA for 2023 and ensure free ration under the Act for the estimated 81.35 crore beneficiaries for that year. In other words, ration card holders can now avail 5 kg of wheat or rice per month for free rather than at a subsidised rate, while Antyodaya Anna Yojana cardholders will receive 35 kg of free foodgrains. As the estimated number of 81.35 crore beneficiaries is still based on Census 2011 numbers and Public Distribution System entitlements have been limited to ration card holders and quotas framed by the Union Government, some States have gone on to expand benefits to others through the NFSA and other schemes. By taking on the burden of the expenditure for this distribution, the Union government, which has estimated an additional amount of ₹2 lakh crore for the scheme, has provided limited but welcome relief in monetary terms for States.

While the expenditure numbers on food distribution and subsidy provisions seem fiscally expensive, the schemes have provided distress relief to the most needy, helped the Government control its food buffer stocks better, and also reduced wastage of procured food grains at a time when procurement figures for rice and wheat by the Food Corporation of India remain high. The PDS and the PMGKY have not only enabled basic food security but have also acted as income transfers for the poor by allowing them to buy other commodities that they could not have afforded if not for the benefits. There is, of course, the question of whether targeted distribution, including the identification of priority households and the "poorest of the poor", has really helped the benefits reaching the deserving with concerns about diversion of foodgrains. But as rights activists have argued, the more robust solution could be a universalisation of the PDS, which has already worked well in a few States such as Tamil Nadu, as the scheme would be availed by anyone in need instead of a flawed targeting system.

Big cash, short form

The IPL has emerged as a sporting behemoth over the years

The Indian Premier League (IPL) auctions have come a long way since those initial days in 2008. Just as the league emerged as a sporting behemoth attracting leading cricketers and fresh talent both from the overseas and domestic sectors, its brand equity was often revealed through the astronomical money that the franchises were allowed to spend at the player auctions. The mini-auction at Kochi again reiterated the robust financial underpinnings of the league with top dollar being spent on the cricketers. The overwhelming flavour though was about team owners chasing all-rounders, as those who offered value with both bat and ball stayed in demand. It was no surprise that England's Sam Curran was picked by Punjab Kings at ₹18.5 crore while Mumbai Indians jostled for a while to grab the star. Mumbai Indians settled for Australia's Cameron Green at ₹17.5 crore. Meanwhile, Chennai Super Kings (CSK) associated with a sense of continuity through its core group led by M.S. Dhoni, splurged ₹16.25 crore on Ben Stokes. The England Test skipper and coach Brendon McCullum have redefined the way cricket's longest format is played, and Stokes also lends a spark to Twenty20s, the only other segment he plays after retiring from ODIs. England, which had disdain towards the IPL during its formative years, has now embraced the league.

A combined expenditure of ₹167 crore for 80 players was incurred by the franchises during a frenetic evening at Kochi. Having retained essential players in the lead-up to this auction, teams ranging from defending champion Gujarat Titans to Lucknow Super Giants were keen to plug their resource-gaps. Even if all-rounders were the flavour, money was spent on the single-skilled players too, especially batters. With the IPL set to unveil the 'impact-player' rule in the coming season, which means a super-substitute could be fielded for his primary ability, it was no surprise that the likes of Harry Brook, Mayank Agarwal or a Manish Pandey, evoked interest. Titans also picked Kane Williamson, the New Zealander, who was released by Sunrisers Hyderabad. There could be captaincy sweepstakes too and while there is speculation around Stokes being a probable successor to Dhoni at CSK, the fact that the Chennai unit went all out to retain a miffed Ravindra Jadeja well ahead of the auction, adds an intriguing thread. But then Stokes does not lead England in T20s with Jos Buttler doing the honours. Having coped with the COVID-19 pandemic and its logistical disruptions in the previous editions, the league's administrators are hoping that the forthcoming summer edition will be smooth even if there are fears over another wave.

Constitutional silences, unconstitutional inaction

Mukund P. Unny

is an Advocate on Record in the Supreme Court of India

When the Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly, the founders left deliberate gaps in it to enable a future Parliament to modify and amend the Constitution that was in accordance with the aspirations and the will of the people. This ostensibly gave birth to a Constitution with glaring misses.

One of the silences in the Constitution is in Article 200 which does not prescribe a timeline for the Governor to provide assent to Bills sent by the Legislative Assembly. This has been used to advantage by the Governors of various Opposition-ruled States to obfuscate the mandate of democratically elected governments. The examples range from the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Bill, 2022 (passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly) to the Kerala Lok Ayukta (Amendment) Bill, 2022 (passed by the Kerala Assembly). In Tamil Nadu alone, almost 20 Bills are awaiting assent by the Governor. The situation is no different in Telangana and West Bengal as well. Can the Governor just sit on Bills endlessly?

Constitutional scheme

When the draft of Article 200 was discussed in the Constituent Assembly, Prof. Shibban Lal Saxena rightly highlighted how there is no time limit prescribed for the Governor to act. In *Purushothaman Nambudiri vs State of Kerala* (1962), a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court clarified that the Constitution does not impose any time limit within which the Governor should provide assent to Bills. Interestingly, the question as to whether the Governor can sit on Bills indefinitely did not arise before the Court; the Court too had no occasion to provide an authoritative ruling on it. However, the Court has maintained that the Governor must honour the will of the Legislature and that the President or a Governor can act only in harmony with their Council of Ministers. When a Governor, a central government-appointee, withholds assent to a law validly passed by the Legislature, he is undoing the will of the Legislature through unconstitutional devices, thereby directly attacking the federal edifice of the Constitution. Causing delay to assent Bills will be an arbitrary exercise, which in itself is constitutionally abhorrent.

One of the 'silences' in the Constitution is in Article 200, which has been used by some Governors to obfuscate the mandate of democratically elected governments

The additional issue of the President not acting swiftly to grant assent to the Bills reserved by the Governor for the consideration of the President cannot be missed. The President has not yet acted on the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET)-exemption Bill passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly, after it was referred to the President in May 2022. There is no timeline prescribed for even the President, under Article 201 of the Constitution, to decide on the outcome of the Bill. Even as there is no timeline for the President to grant assent, there is a timeline of six months applicable to the State Assembly to reconsider the Bill if the President decides to refer it back to the House.

Call for reforms

In a consultation paper, the 'Institution of Governor under the Constitution', the Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy-led Committee states that if the Governor withholds assent to a Bill indefinitely, "such a course will not be conducive with the decorous regard a Governor is expected to the rules of the Constitutional game....". The 'National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution' that was set up by the A.B. Vajpayee government in 2000 recommended that "there should be a time-limit – say a period of six months – within which the Governor should take a decision whether to grant assent or to reserve a Bill for consideration of the President." It is also important to understand the real objective behind Article 200 requiring the Governor to grant assent to Bills. It was felt that an independent Governor would be necessary to act as a check and balance, to avoid the state-enacted law being repugnant to the Union laws. Some State governments expressed an opinion before the Sarkaria Commission that a "Governor will act as a safety-valve against hasty legislations and by their operation enable the State Government and Legislature to have a second look at it".

The Sarkaria Commission went to the extent of suggesting a cure to the terminal illness plaguing the federal ecosystem of the country. It was suggested that delay from the side of the Governor in granting assent can be avoided by streamlining the existing procedures; by making prior consultation with the Governor at the stage of the drafting of the Bill itself, and by prescribing time-limits for its disposal.

Delay thwarts reasonableness

In the realm of administrative law, unreasonable delay in granting administrative sanction would be violative of the rule of law. Therefore, it implies that the Governor will have to grant assent or decline the same within a 'reasonable time'. 'Reasonable time' is what is necessary, under the circumstances, to do conveniently what the contract or duty requires should be done in a particular case. In *Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs The Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly* (2020), a case on anti-defection law, the Supreme Court held that the Speaker must act on disqualification petitions against the defecting MLAs within a 'reasonable time'. It clarified in the same judgment that reasonable time is three months in the case of disqualification petitions.

The concept that the Queen reigns, but the Ministers rule is the bedrock of the Westminster system. The Governor's duty is only to ensure that an elected government is working within the parameters of the Constitution. It does not mean that the Governor can sit on the Bills indefinitely, merely because there is no time limit prescribed for the Governor to decide on the bills. The Constitution should be read contextually to provide a meaning that the Governor must act on the Bills within a reasonable time, say three months. The constitutional silences should not give way for unconstitutional inaction, leaving space for anarchy in the rule of law. As Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer put it pithily in *Shamsher Singh and Anr. vs State Of Punjab*, "may be, our founding fathers were not political prophets who could foresee glaring abuses or perverted developments".

A yatra as darning material to repair India's gashes

Kamal Haasan

is an actor, politician and founder of the Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM)

The Editorials and articles written in the opinion section of *The Hindu* are by eclectic, eloquent editors and writers. For a change, I urge readers to listen to a high-school drop-out, an entrepreneur and an artist. Even the statesman Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, K. Kamaraj did not get this opportunity and I am honoured to do so, speaking to readers not with cleverness, but with his wisdom, even if it is second or third hand.

The essence of the Constitution

The Constitution of India is as important as the freedom struggle was for our country. Arrived at, after being discussed at length by representatives of India's Constituent Assembly on the one hand and enlivened by the views and the experiences of our freedom fighting generation on the other, the Constitution was intended not only as a paediatric prescription for young India but also for the adult and ageing India as well.

It was a well-thought-out document, written not just by peoples' representatives but also by qualified lawyers with a firm grounding in legal reasoning, theory, and a comparative sense of how Constitutions evolved in democracies elsewhere as well. Now, mere politicians are aspiring and daring to rewrite it and reverse the gains made at the birth of the Indian republic. Of course, constitutions need to be subject to revision and amendments, but these must be done without bias and through reason, by holding on to our independent nation's founding principles; not by subverting them.

There have been measures that have hurt the citizenry and damaged the idea of Bharat as a country that was stitched together by visionaries

When I say this, I do this as a political centrist and whose centrism is sometimes mistaken as "opportunism". Centrism-imbued varied thoughts and ways of life such as Buddha's *Dhammapada* (the way of truth), the *Thirukkural*'s *Naduvu Nilamai* (equipoise) and *Advaitha* (non-dualism). They all celebrated a centrist philosophy.

The rationale

Why should we celebrate and join the Bharat Jodo Yatra? We have been witness to a time when several measures have hurt our citizenry. These include the hasty implementation of the Goods and Services Tax, the demonetisation debacle besides rising instances of caste and communal discrimination. The citizens' hard-earned right to information has been diluted through devious illegalities. The judiciary has been sought to be stifled as the executive makes remarks that amount to questioning its independence.

Joining the Bharat Jodo Yatra and the march with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is an unbiased comment about the present situation perpetuated by a government. The party affiliations of the organisers of the march do not matter. I would have joined a similar march against the Emergency in the mid-1970s irrespective of the fact that my father was a former Congressman of the party led by Indira Gandhi.

Some intellectuals and richer segments of our population have sought to portray politics as a profession that is "infra dig". This has led to thugs and opportunists emboldening themselves to enter electoral politics across the country, leading to rabid infections in the body politic. We need to beware of these infections and must imbibe the message that if we do not impact politics, politics will impact our lives mercilessly.

The idea and notion of Bharat as a country was stitched together by visionaries. I believe that it is the time, now, to darn the gashes that this country has suffered due to those who have sought to belittle and overturn that vision of our country. And the Bharat Jodo Yatra is that darn that will help us do so.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COVID-19 alert

Just when we thought we were getting over the COVID-19 pandemic, there comes the news of its resurgence in various parts of the world. With far fewer hospitalisations in India at this point in time, most people seem to think that COVID-19 has ceased to be a killer disease and instead become a 'minor illness'. However, the verdict on it should be left to the epidemiologists. Perhaps the vastly reduced number of cases also explains why many people in India are dragging their feet on taking booster doses. The Government should convince people of the benefits accruing from booster doses.

G. David Milton,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

That testing of international air passengers is to resume is a welcome step. State governments must now insist on safety measures in public areas such as wearing masks, cleansing hands with sanitizer, and maintaining physical distancing. Booster doses should be the norm. People should cooperate with the Government by strictly following COVID-19 protocols.

D. Sethuraman,
Chennai

There should be enhanced concerns over the current and emerging pandemic crisis in China. This prolific manufacturing nation inexplicably opting for crippling lockdowns of long durations, cannot be dismissed as due to poor governance or inferior vaccines. There must be more to it. Clearly, the last six months of draconian isolation for investigation and counter measures have not yielded results. Perhaps the virulence is too severe to comprehend, much less arrest. China, as is wont, may not share information but the silence of the World Health Organization should worry all.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

Yatra and protocol

The perception is that the government of the day appears to be strategising over checkmating the Bharat Jodo Yatra, with its messaging about the need to observe COVID-19 protocols. Why did not the need to observe these occur to anyone during the recent elections? Our airports, the main ingress points, are what need to be given strict instructions. One has also seen the levels of compliance in Parliament. Selective application of COVID-19 protocols seems disingenuous.

R. Thomas Paul,
Bengaluru

Comments on judiciary

It is quite unfortunate that the Vice-President and the Chairman of Rajya Sabha took cognisance of something spoken outside the House and vented his ire on the floor of the House with his adverse remarks (Inside pages, "Session ends in RS amid din over V-P's remark on Sonia", December 24). It is intriguing that Mr. Jagdeep Dhankhar has not found the observations of the Law Minister, spoken on the floor of the House and outside regarding the functionality of the judiciary, as a damaging stance.

K. Nehru Patnaik,
Visakhapatnam

It does not behove the stature of the Vice-President and Chairman Rajya Sabha while occupying a high constitutional post to be taking potshots at a Member of Parliament. If the said Member called a spade a spade, why is Mr. Dhankhar reacting as though he is batting for the ruling dispensation?
His august office has a certain sanctity and dignity of its own, which needs to be preserved.

P.K. Sharma,
Barnala, Punjab

Nets and fishing

The issue of purse seine fishing needs to be looked at from the larger perspective of problems of traditional fishing communities, fishing beyond natural replacement limits, collateral damage to other non-targeted species of fish and other marine dwellers (Page 1, "Purse seines come with a divisive catch", December 25). It is uncharitable to attribute the opposition to purse seine fishing as jealousy, whereas in reality the fishing methods such as purse seine and bottom trawling, to name a few, are threatening the very livelihoods of traditional fishermen. Fish populations are declining so fast due to modern methods of fishing that a large number of species are already overfished. Often, the purse seine method is used along with fishing aggregation devices, aggravating the problem. Purse seines cannot be banned but can be regulated. Why not completely ban modern methods of fishing in the 12 nautical miles zone from the shore? Or a rule that modern vessels can go to sea only in alternate months? There should also be steps to replenish stocks of various species of fish.

Kosaraju Chandramouli,
Hyderabad

Forgotten teaching

It is unfortunate that midnight Mass to ring in Christmas has been disrupted after confrontation between two groups of the faithful over celebration of the Mass led to violent clashes and damage to church properties at the St. Mary's Cathedral attached to the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese. It is unfortunate that the police had to be called in. The Holy Mass needs to be kept out of politics. "Forgive and be kind" is one of the greatest teachings of Christ. The faithful who were engaged in the confrontation have completely forgotten this.

K.A. Solaman,
Alappuzha, Kerala

State of Fiji

Fiji may be a very small country, yet its strategic location makes it an important player in the edgy competition that exists between the United States and China. What is essential is a stable and peaceful Fiji. Any disturbances will end up benefiting China.

Madhusree Guha,
Kolkata

Corrections & Clarifications

A Sports page highlight under the headline "Unadkat ends the longest wait by an Indian cricketer" (December 23, 2022) erroneously said "Left-arm pacer Jaydev Unadkat made his Test debut against South Africa at Centurion on Dec. 16, 2020." The correct year is 2010.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail:readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.

Forest rights and heritage conservation

Of the 39 areas declared by UNESCO in 2012 as being critical for biodiversity in the Western Ghats, 10 are in Karnataka. Before recognising areas as world heritage sites, UNESCO seeks the opinion of the inhabitants on the implication of the possible declaration on their lives and livelihoods.

This author interacted with different stakeholders in the gram panchayats located close to the world heritage sites in Karnataka. The primary stakeholders were Scheduled Tribes (STs). Other traditional forest dwellers include Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Classes, minorities and the general category. An overwhelming majority said that they were not aware of the process that leads to the declaration of UNESCO heritage sites.

Madhusudan Bandi

is a faculty member with the Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad. Views are personal

Forest Rights Act

The majority of the forest dwellers claimed land measuring not more than one acre. It is clear that the claims were nowhere close to the ceiling of four hectares permitted under the Forest Rights Act (FRA). The rejection rate of the other traditional forest dwellers was two times more than the STs. In the case of the STs, the reasons were attributed to fresh encroachments; the claimants not living on the lands claimed; claimed lands being on '*paisari bhoomis*' (wasteland and forest lands which have not been notified as protected forests or reserved forests) or revenue lands; and multiple applications made in a single family. In the case of other traditional forest dwellers, it was mainly failure to produce evidence of dependency and dwelling on forest land for 75 years.

The officials said the FRA is good law which recognises the rights of the STs because of their overall backwardness. However, most felt there should be a closure to this Act; and that the process cannot go on forever with new claims emerging on a regular basis. Presenting the declaration of the world heritage site in a positive light, they said that illegal tree-felling and poaching have come down following the stringent implementation of rules in the 'protected areas'. Most forest dwellers acknowledged this fact.

The people in the villages falling under eco-sensitive zones said they had started experiencing severe restrictions on their entry into the forest. Development activities like road repair has been stopped. Farming is not allowed in a normal way, a slight sound is demurred, the use of fertilizers is banned, and even a small knife is not allowed to be carried into the forest. The people are prohibited from cutting trees falling on their houses to undertake repair work or move the earth. A striking revelation was that these restrictions were in enforcement from the time these areas were declared as protected areas and not necessarily after their declaration as world heritage sites.

The increasing animal insurgency is causing damage to the crops of the farming forest dwellers. Those who don't have recognition over their lands are not given compensation for the loss. Monkeys and snakes released from urban settings into the forests enter their houses. More importantly, the monkeys do not survive in the wild for long.

Owning livestock in the villages close to forests is more challenging than in regular revenue villages. In the areas where irrigation projects have come up, the affected people reported that grazing lands have been taken over by the government to compensate for the forest land lost to such projects.

Democratic and transparent consultations help achieve the objectives of ensuring the rights of forest dwellers and fulfilling conservation efforts

Current status

The respondents were in possession of the lands claimed under the FRA even though their applications were either rejected or were still pending. However, in many places, they were apprehensive that people were accepting the resettlement packages and moving out of 'protected areas' for good. They worried that if half the village population moved away, it would become difficult for the remaining ones to live their normal life.

Most forest dwellers said they were still deprived of basic facilities and other government benefits extended under various schemes and programmes as they don't possess the 'Records of Rights, Tenancy and Crops' that is required along with the title of the land. The government must address this issue in consonance with the rules of the Act.

Half the world heritage sites in Karnataka fall under protected areas (National Park: 1; Wildlife Sanctuaries: 4) and the remaining are reserved forests. The issue becomes complicated when the people refuse to 're-locate' on grounds of their attachment to the land fearing extinction of their culture and religious roots. The gram sabha appears supreme in the Act in deciding the 'proposed resettlement' as it has to give 'free informed consent'. However, this does not happen. Hence, the government must bring more clarity to the Act to avoid conflicts between the government agencies conserving biodiversity and the people living in the forest for over decades and centuries.

Finally, the conservation of biodiversity requires special attention. Yet, forest dwellers willing to live in the forest must be allowed to stay. Many of them comply with the norms of the eco-sensitive zone because they do not depend on modern development needs such as the the use of fertilizers and mobile phones. In the same breath, those wanting to experience the fruits of development must be relocated according to their choice of a new place and a suitable package. This can be possible only when the areas declared as 'protected' are arrived at after consultations with the local population. This did not take place in a transparent way at the time of the declaration of world heritage site or earlier, when protected areas were notified.

Fighting the menace of online gambling

More can be done to prevent people from falling prey to misleading advertisements

STATE OF PLAY

T. Ramakrishnan
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Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi has chosen to remain silent on the fate of the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Bill even four weeks after the Ordinance on the same subject lapsed. There are several pieces of legislation awaiting the Governor's clearance, but the Bill in question is different from the rest. An ordinance to prohibit online gambling and regulate online games in Tamil Nadu was promulgated on October 1 by Mr. Ravi. On October 19, the State Assembly adopted the Bill and sent it to the Governor for consent.

All parties in the State support the ban on online gambling. The AIADMK's interim general secretary, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, who met the Governor a month ago to give a memorandum against the State government, favoured the legislation. His party, while in power, had also passed a law against online games, but the law was quashed by the Madras High Court in August 2021 as being "excessive and disproportionate" to the object sought to be achieved. BJP State unit president K. Annamalai too was firm that online gambling should be banned. Pattali Makkal Katchi president Anbumani Ramadoss even suggested that the DMK regime issue an executive order under Article 162 of the Constitution to prohibit online gambling.

Meanwhile, deaths by suicide attributed to online gambling continue to take place in Tamil Nadu. As per an official estimate, in the last one and a half years, 32 persons died by

suicide and there was one case of murder. The State government says the deaths can be attributed to online gaming and there are no deaths by suicide on account of offline gaming.

Neither the Governor nor his office has commented publicly on the Bill. Mr. Ravi met both Law Minister S. Regupathy and representatives of the E-gaming Federation and heard their views in the first week of December. According to the industry, he did not give any assurance or commit to a follow-up meeting. The representatives explained to him that the Bill sought to ban rummy and poker, both of which are 'games of skill', and this was unconstitutional. Mr. Ravi told Mr. Regupathy that the Bill was still under consideration and that he would give his assent once his doubts were cleared.

As the government continues to wait, reports say there is a spike in messages or advertisements on mobile phones, tempting people to take to online gambling. Some link this to the lapse of the ordinance on November 27.

While the Bill is pending with the Governor, there are other legal provisions that can be invoked to protect people from falling prey to misleading advertisements. M. Somasundaram, a consumer activist, contends that the matter can be taken to the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), which notified six months ago guidelines regarding the prevention of false or misleading advertisements and making endorsements.

Though the norms have been issued, keeping in mind the sensitivity and vulnerability of children to advertisements, an aggrieved person can approach the CCPA if he or she regards any advertisement on online games as misleading. After all, the guidelines aim to protect consumers' interest by bringing in more transparency and clarity in the way advertisements are published. For violation of the guidelines, the CCPA has been empowered to impose penalties.

According to Section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, the CCPA can impose a penalty of up to ₹10 lakh on manufacturers, advertisers and endorsers for any misleading advertisement. For further contraventions, the penalty can go up to ₹50 lakh. Also, the endorser can be prohibited from making any endorsement for up to one year. For subsequent violations, the ban can extend up to three years.

Besides, as online games can be regarded as falling within the definition of e-commerce, the activist says the law authorises the Central government to take measures to prevent unfair trade practices in e-commerce and protect the interests and rights of consumers. Also, the authorities can launch a drive to sensitise people on the availability of various legal options as the idea is to end the menace of online gambling.

Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is available on the State's health helpline 104, Tele-MANAS 14416, and Sneha's Suicide Prevention Helpline 044-24640050

Cricketers' dilemma: gearing up for Tests or money-spinners?

Median player earnings vary massively between domestic leagues and international contracts

DATA POINT

Vignesh Radhakrishnan

On Saturday evening, Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan and the hero of the ODI series, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, spun a web around Indian batsmen in the second Test against India at Mirpur. Like a pack of cards, K.L. Rahul, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara returned to the pavilion without scoring double digits. This was after Litton Das' brilliant knock under pressure, which ensured that Bangladesh got a decent total. On Sunday, the retreat continued with Mehidy getting a fifer after he bamboozled both Rishabh Pant and Axar Patel. With India tottering at 74 for 7, Ravichandran Ashwin and Shreyas Iyer joined hands to chase down the remaining 71 runs in a nail-biting finish denying Bangladesh their first Test win against India.

The thrilling encounter will fetch the Indian players a match fee of $18,000 each and Bangladeshi players $5,600 each. In addition, the players get a central contract amount annually. All figures are approximations and based on last Friday's exchange rate.

Less than 24 hours before the drama started to unfold in Mirpur, in a mini-auction of the Indian Premier League (IPL), Mehidy was not even part of the shortlist. Shakib and Das remained unsold in the auction in the initial rounds and were picked up at the last moment as teams had many slots to fill.

Das and Shakib were picked up for about $60,500 and $1,80,000, respectively, by the Kolkata Knight Riders. Even after accounting for TDS and other similar deductions, this is a lucrative deal for a minimum of 14 T20 matches regardless of their inclusion in the playing XI. All the Indian players listed above except Pujara were retained by the respective IPL teams. The retention deals ranged between $19,00,000 and $7,00,000.

Such massive variance between median player earnings in international and domestic leagues existed in eight out of the 10 teams analysed by the Federation of International Cricketers Association (FICA) as shown in **Chart 1.** Domestic leagues earnings are based on the average contract size from The Hundred, IPL and BBL. The report further notes, "This (gap) is further amplified by the workload of domestic leagues being generally half that of international cricket on a time / wage basis - i.e. "twice the pay for half the work"

Given the variance, it comes as no surprise that 49% of cricketers across 11 countries surveyed by FICA said they would reject a central contract if they were paid more in domestic leagues. This is despite the fact that 74% of them still consider Test cricket to be the most important format. The survey also revealed that 69% of the players had less than 12 months to run on their current national contract with 46% rating their relationship with their National Governing Body as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Even the national cricket associations are increasingly scheduling more T20 matches between countries given the popularity of the format. **Chart 2** shows the percentage share of international matches played by eight countries across different formats. In 2022, 50% of all international matches were T20s, 30% were ODIs and 18% were Tests. A decade ago, the ratio was 30% T20s, 45% ODIs and 25% Tests.

Chart 3 shows the absolute number of T20s, ODIs and Tests played by select nations in the last decade. India played 40 T20s in 2022, the most by any nation in any year. England continued to play a high number of Tests even while increasing their T20 count. However, in general, the number of T20s is increasing at the cost of ODIs and Tests.

Choosing a format

Chart 1 is sourced from the 2022 report of the Federation of International Cricketers Association. Charts 2 and 3 are built using data from Cricinfo

India's Ravichandran Ashwin celebrates after hitting the winning runs against Bangladesh on Sunday. AP

Chart 1 | The chart shows international and domestic median player earnings in $million. The team names are not mentioned

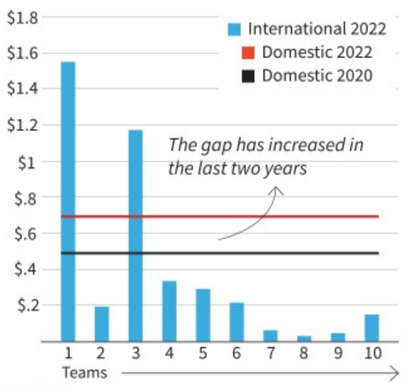

Chart 2 | The chart shows the % share of international matches played by eight countries across different formats

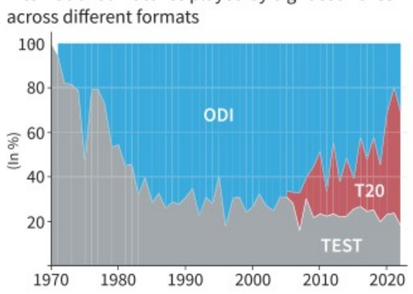

Chart 3 | The chart 3 shows the absolute number of Tests, ODIs and T20s played by select nations in the last decade

		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Tests	Australia	15	10	4	14	13	12	9	11	14	9	13	11	11	10	12	3	5	10
	England	13	14	11	12	14	14	8	15	14	8	14	17	11	13	12	9	15	15
	India	8	12	10	15	6	14	12	9	8	10	9	12	11	14	8	4	14	7
	NZ	7	8	2	14	8	6	5	10	12	9	8	11	7	7	8	6	6	7
	Pakistan	9	12	8		9	10	10	6	8	9	8	11	6	9	6	5	9	8
	S. Africa	11	11	9	15	6	11	5	10	9	8	8	9	12	10	8	4	6	10
	Sri Lanka	9	11	8	6	11	6	11	10	4	11	11	9	13	12	8	3	9	8
	W. Indies	11	10	5	9	12	6	10	10	7	7	10	8	10	9	6	5	10	7
ODIs	Australia	29	29	34	18	39	25	25	25	24	18	19	29	15	13	23	13	3	17
	England	22	20	34	21	22	17	30	15	21	25	26	18	20	24	22	9	9	12
	India	27	30	37	29	31	27	34	17	34	24	23	13	29	20		9	6	24
	NZ	19	14	33	16	24	21	17	15	19	16	32	18	20	13	21	4	3	16
	Pakistan	22	23	21	21	20	18	32	18	34	16	27	11	18	18	25	3	6	9
	S. Africa	24	24	30	17	18	16	15	13	29	19	24	17	19	17	19	6	10	12
	Sri Lanka	16	36	29	27	27	22	28	33	30	32	25	19	29	17	21	3	15	11
	W. Indies	18	33	23	20	21	17	28	17	24	13	15	14	22	18	28	6	9	21
T20s	Australia	2	2	9	2	9	15	6	13	6	13	1	12	5	19	8	9	22	21
	England	1	2	8	3	9	11	7	14	7	12	5	10	7	9	9	12	17	27
	India		1	8	1	10	7	4	14	1	7	4	21	13	19	16	11	16	40
	NZ	2	3	8	5	12	13	2	17	7	10	4	10	8	13	12	11	23	22
	Pakistan		1	10	5	11	18	5	16	12	7	10	15	10	19	10	11	29	26
	S. Africa	1	3	8	2	12	11	3	15	8	10	9	9	9	7	8	9	23	18
	Sri Lanka		3	5	4	13	9	4	11	9	9	4	16	15	8	13	5	20	25
	W. Indies		1	5	4	8	10	5	13	5	15	5	11	10	15	12	8	25	24

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FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 26, 1972

Rajagopalachari passes away

Madras, Dec. 25: We record with profound regret the death of Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, former Governor-General of India, at the General Hospital here on Monday evening. He was 94. The elder statesman breathed his last at 3-44 p.m. bringing to an end his valiant struggle for survival which virtually started on Saturday morning when there was a setback to his illness. Rajaji was rallying round remarkably on Sunday and it was thought that he would turn the corner. But another crisis set in early Monday morning when he had an attack of asthma and developed breathing trouble. A team of doctors, headed by Dr. Satyanarayana, Superintendent of the Hospital, waged a relentless battle throughout the day to save his life. But his condition gradually worsened. Mr. Rajagopalachari took ill a couple of days before his birthday on December 8 when he had an abdominal fungus infection. As he was recovering from it, uraemia developed requiring intensive specialised treatment and he was admitted in the hospital on December 17. Announcing the death of Rajaji to newsmen, Dr. Satyanarayana said: "Our beloved leader, a frail, simple and mighty man, has completed his grand mortal journey on this planet." Rajaji is survived by two sons, Mr. C.R. Krishnaswami and Mr. C.R. Narasimhan, and two daughters, Mrs. Namagiri and Mrs. Lakshmi Devadas Gandhi. Besides his family members, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, Chief Minister and his Cabinet colleagues, Mr. K. Kamaraj, Congress (O) leader, Mr. C. Subramaniam and Mr. S. Mohan Kumaramangalam, Union Ministers, Mr. T. Sadasivam, Mr. T.T. Krishnamachari, and Mr. G.K. Sundaram and Dr. H.V. Hande, Swatantra leaders, were at his bedside when he passed away. As his end was nearing, Narasimhan chanted "Karnamantram" into Rajaji's ears and Mrs. M.S. Subbulakshmi and members of Rajaji's family recited devotional songs.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 26, 1922

Lausanne conference

Lausane, Dec. 25: The Turkish Delegation has replied to the British memorandum concerning Mosal in a lengthy document, advancing a series of arguments, historical, ethnographical and statistical, tending to refute the British statement that Mosal is indivisible from Iraq and contesting the British population figures.

From Page One

'Prachanda' named Nepal Prime Minister

Among the surprises on Sunday was the decision by the newly formed RSP, led by former TV anchor Mr. Lamicchane, whose campaign pitch for a "clean, anti-establishment" party had led some to assume that the party would remain in the Opposition for now.

"The RSP got the votes by promising to get things done: improving rule of law, reducing corruption, improving government services, providing access to high quality healthcare and education for all, creating jobs, etc.," RSP Central Committee member Arnico Panday told *The Hindu*, when asked about the turnaround. "We cannot achieve those by sitting in the Opposition. We have been talking to all parties to find the best way to move forward on our agenda. The new coalition provided us with the best opportunity."

The RSP, which has 20 seats combined from the general election and the proportional representation categories, is now the fourth largest party in the 275-member Pratinidhi Sabha, and will tip the balance in favour of the Prachanda-led coalition.

Earlier, Mr. Prachanda had broken away from the Nepali Congress-led ruling coalition which had governed Nepal since its leader Sher Bahadur Deuba was appointed Prime Minister in a Supreme Court-initiated move in July 2021.

Sunday's developments have put an end to weeks of negotiations that began after the general election of November failed to produce a clear winner though the Nepali Congress emerged as the single largest party. The election, however, was difficult as several Ministers in the Deuba Cabinet lost their seats and a number of smaller parties such as the RSP and Nagarik Unmukti Party emerged as new political players. It was understood that the smaller parties would play a crucial role in helping either of the two big blocs led by Mr. Deuba and Mr. Oli form the next government.

'Ready to work with India for better ties'

Mr. Wang briefly touched on India-China relations that have been bogged down since April 2020 when China tried to move a large number of its troops to the disputed areas in eastern Ladakh, resulting in a prolonged military stand-off.

The two countries have held 17 rounds of talks so far to resolve the stand-off.

The 17th round of the India-China Corps Commander Level Meeting was held on December 20 during which the two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest, according to a joint press release issued after the talks.

Agra man from China tests COVID positive

"Teams of the Health Department have been asked to conduct tests on those who came into contact with him," Mr. Srivastava said. The man returned to Agra from China via Delhi on December 23. This the first COVID-19 positive case in the district detected after November 25, officials said.

Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases in some countries, including China, the Centre has ramped up its measures to contain the novel coronavirus.

The health department in Agra began collecting samples of foreign tourists at Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Akbar's Tomb. Besides, samples are also being collected at the Agra airport, railway station and Inter Bus Terminal, officials said.

'Blind leading the blind,' HC tells judicial officers

However, the sessions court followed a wrong procedure and forwarded the default bail petition back to the magistrate with a direction not to send any papers to it. "This direction given by the learned sessions judge is in total ignorance of the provisions of the UAP Act and a Full Bench judgment on the issue," the Bench observed.

Thereafter, on November 15, the Ambur police filed a petition before the magistrate for extending the remand period from 90 to 120 days, though such petition ought to have been filed only before the sessions court. This time, the magistrate too faltered by allowing the remand extension petition first and then dismissing the bail petition on the ground of having extended the remand.

'Both orders illegal'

The Division Bench held that both the orders passed by the magistrate were illegal and *non-est* in the eye of law on the simple ground that they had been passed by the magistrate and not by the sessions court as required by law. It also stated that denial of statutory bail was not sustainable even on considering the merits of the case.

The 90-day remand period expired on October 27 and the accused preferred the default bail plea on November 11. However, the police chose to file the remand extension application only on November 15. Therefore, the bail application ought not to have been dismissed on the ground of having allowed the remand extension application, they said.

Former Bhutan King warned India about China: Dulat

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Bhutan's former King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, warned India of pressures from China in 1999, writes former RAW chief A.S. Dulat in his latest book.

Mr. Dulat says the former King's words were "prophetic" about India-China tensions in Doklam in 2017, and the build-up of infrastructure by China that has followed.

He also says that New Delhi's "muscular policy" on a range of issues, including the situation in Kashmir, and tough foreign policy in the neighbourhood led to "failures".

According to the book, *A Life in the Shadows*, Mr. Dulat, who visited Thimphu for three days in 1999, spent time with the then King, known as "K4", who abdicated in 2015 in favour of his son, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

"Democracy is coming sooner rather than later. But [the Indian establishment] is making things a little difficult for us. The Chinese are breathing down our necks," Mr. Dulat paraphrases the former King as telling him during his visit, adding that the King was convinced that the problems with China would "only increase" if India "pushed" Bhutan too much.

Mr. Dulat, who is now retired and lives in Delhi, told *The Hindu* that he believed the former King was referring to Chinese pressure at the time to conclude the border settlement with Bhutan.

He also said that the King was convinced that as Bhutan grew more democratic, there would be more engagement with China on the issue.

A.S. Dulat

24 round of talks

Since 1984, Bhutan and China have held 24 rounds of talks largely focussed on "swapping" two separate areas of dispute: Doklam and other areas near the India-China-Bhutan trijunction measuring 269 sq. km, with the Jakarlung and Pasamlung valleys located near Tibet to Bhutan's north, which measure 495 sq. km. Through the 2000s, the talks did not make much headway, after New Delhi made its reservations clear, but the talks were resumed subsequently, and in 2021, China and Bhutan announced a "three-step road map" for a resolution of the boundary disputes between them.

In addition, Mr. Dulat notes that since the India-China stand-off at Doklam ended in 2017, China has increased its infrastructure in the area, including a road and "model village" on the eastern periphery of the Doklam plateau. "The old King [Jigme Singye Wangchuck] was a sharp man, and looking back, his remarks have been prophetic," Mr. Dulat writes in the memoirs.

The book, which has been in the news for Mr. Dulat's dealings with separatist leaders of the Hurriyat in Kashmir during his time in the Intelligence Bureau (IB), and former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's office, and for an entire chapter about National Security Adviser Ajit Doval called "Spooks as friends: a tale of two spymasters" about their work on Kashmir, and during the IC-814 hijack, also includes a number of direct conversations he had with world leaders.

Mr. Dulat writes that even a decade after former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassination by the LTTE, then Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga suspected that India had links with LTTE chief Prabhakaran, and had summoned Mr. Dulat to ask him about his whereabouts. He says that Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was "another leader who liked to get her intelligence briefings directly from the head of the R&AW".

In his earlier role as a security official with the IB, Mr. Dulat recounts his meeting with Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chief Yasser Arafat in 1980, who received special permission from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's office to allow him as a foreign leader to carry a revolver on his person, and with British Prince Charles (now King Charles III) and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, both of whom complained of being "frozen out" in icy conversations with Mrs. Gandhi during their respective visits to India.

Justice Dept. says raising judges' retirement age may benefit non-performers

It may have a cascading effect with other govt. employees making a similar demand, dept. tells House Panel; it may deprive tribunals of having retired judges as presiding officers

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Increasing the retirement age of Supreme Court and High Court judges could extend the years of service of non-performing judges and might have a cascading effect with government employees raising a similar demand, the Department of Justice has told a parliamentary panel.

It also said increasing the retirement age of judges would be considered along with measures to ensure transparency and accountability in appointments to the higher judiciary.

In July, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju had informed Parliament that there was no proposal to increase the retirement age of Supreme Court and High Court judges.

The Department of Justice made a presentation before the parliamentary panel on Personnel, Law, and Justice that was chaired by BJP MP and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi. The Department in the Ministry of Law and Justice made the presentation that comprised details of judicial processes and reforms, including on the possibility of increasing the retirement age of High Court and Supreme Court judges.

No change: Law Minister Kiren Rijiju told Parliament in July that there is no proposal to increase the retirement age of judges. PTI

Other measures

"Enhancing the age of retirement might extend benefits in terms of extended years of service in certain non-deserving cases and lead to non-performing and under-performing judges to continue," the Department said in its presentation. It also suggested that raising the retirement age of judges should be considered along with bringing down pending cases and bringing transparency in the judiciary.

"It would be inappropriate if the increase in retirement age is considered along with other measures to ensure transparency, accountability in the appointments to the higher judiciary, effort to fill up existing vacancies in the district and subordinate judiciary and bringing down arrears of cases pending in courts," the Department said.

It said increasing the retirement age may deprive tribunals of having retired judges as presiding officers or judicial members.

"Enhancement of the retirement age of judges will have a cascading effect as government employees at Central and State level, PSUs, commissions, etc, may raise similar demand. Therefore, this issue needs to be examined in totality," the Department added.

While Supreme Court judges retire at the age of 65 years, High Court judges retire at 62 years.

The 114th Amendment Bill was introduced in 2010 to increase the retirement age of High Court judges to 65 years. However, it was not taken up for consideration in Parliament and lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.

'Ladakh stand-off is signal to India against infra construction in disputed territory'

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Chang Young-Hee

The 2020 stand-off in eastern Ladakh was a signal from China to India over how the situation is likely to play out if it continues to pursue infrastructure construction in the "disputed territory", Isaac B. Kardon, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College, says.

These observations also resonate with the recent clash between the Indian Army and China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the Yangtse area in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh. At the same time, China will continue to deny India space on the global stage owing to widening asymmetries, experts say.

"Indian military was building infrastructure in disputed territory and they (PLA) wanted to take steps to check that... That's probably the acute cause," Mr. Kardon said. He also referred to the recent report of the 20th Chinese Communist Party Congress (CPC) held in October, which spoke of resolutely countering threats that impinge upon their sovereignty.

In November-end, several China experts from India and abroad who speak fluent Mandarin, analysed and debated the outcomes of the 20th CPC, which consolidated President Xi Jinping's power as well as gave him an unprecedented third term. The deliberations were held under the fifth edition of the 'India Forum on China' in Goa organised by the Delhi-based think tank Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) and the India office of the German think tank Kondrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in cooperation with Goa University.

Former Indian Ambassador to China Ashok K. Kantha noted that Mr. Xi's dominance had become so much more pronounced, and it had implications for India and the world, on which Israeli scholar Tuvia Gering, who specialises in Chinese security and foreign policy, referred to Mr. Xi as not just China's most powerful man but also its "storyteller-in-chief".

CPC for new policy

The 20th CPC Congress had promoted hardliners in Chinese diplomatic groups, noted Chang Young-Hee, Research Professor, Sungkyun Institute of China Studies, Seoul. Giving the case of Madagascar as an example, Jabin T. Jacob, Associate Professor at Shiv Nadar University, said the CPC was testing out elements of a new foreign policy and exploited local circumstances to do so. Foreign policy was increasingly an ideological tool for the CPC, he said.

The arrival of new China has had different meanings and depictions since 1949, said Professor Alka Acharya, Honorary Director of ICS. There was consensus among the experts that Mr. Xi has consolidated power even at the cost of undermining the party and under the clarion call to make China great again.

"In the 'new era' under Mr. Xi Jinping, 'Crossing the river by feeling the stones', a dictum of the reform era generally attributed to Deng Xiaoping, has been denounced completely, if we look into Xi's criticism of a 'weak, hollow, and watered-down party leadership' of the reform era, as well as the writings of China's top scholars such as Wen Tiejun," noted Professor B.R. Deepak with Jawaharlal Nehru University.

CAG detects discrepancies in Assam NRC exercise, suggests action against Hajela, Wipro

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) has detected large-scale anomalies in the updating of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

The Supreme Court-monitored NRC exercise began after bureaucrat Prateek Hajela was appointed the State Coordinator in October 2013. The complete draft of the list of citizens was published in August 2019, excluding 19.06 lakh people out of the 3.3 crore applicants.

The CAG report ending March 31, 2020, submitted to the Assam Assembly on December 24, said 215 software utilities were added in a haphazard manner to the core software.

"These were done without following the due process of either software development or selection of vendors," the report said, noting that highly secure and reliable software was required for such an exercise. The haphazard development of software and utilities for the NRC data capture and correction posed the risk of data tampering without leaving any audit trail. Consequently, the intended objective of preparing a valid and error-free NRC was not met, the report said. It pointed out that the project cost for the NRC escalated from ₹288.18 crore to ₹1,602.66 crore due to the time taken to undertake the exercise.

The report said that 215 software utilities were added in a haphazard manner to the core software

Apart from recommending action against Mr. Hajela, the then State Coordinator, the CAG sought penal measures against system integrator Wipro Ltd. for violation of the Minimum Wages Act as "payment was made to operators at a rate less than the minimum wages". The amount of wages paid to the outsourced staff was 45.59% to 64.27% less than the rate approved by the NRC coordination committee, it said, adding that the difference of wages allowed an undue benefit of ₹155.83 crore to the system integrator and the labour contractor beyond the 10% "reasonable profit margin".

Former NRC Coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma had filed an FIR with the Assam Police's Vigilance and Anti-Corruption wing alleging corruption and money laundering by Mr. Hajela.

The updated NRC included people who could prove their Indian citizenship by being residents or descendants of people living in Assam before March 25, 1971.

Election win shows Gujarat remains BJP's fort, says Shah

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the BJP's victory in the Gujarat Assembly election had proved that the State was the party's fort and would remain so. He pointed out that some new parties that had entered the fray and sought to stake a claim in the State were wiped out in the poll.

Addressing a felicitation ceremony for nine BJP MLAs from the Surat area, Mr. Shah lavished praise on BJP Gujarat president C.R. Paatil, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and the State unit for the result, and specifically pointed out that the *panna* committees and other organisational micro-management strategies by Mr. Paatil had been very effective. "This victory will have a positive effect on the 2024 picture," he said at a virtual conference.

APPEAL

Elankathir is 6 years suffering from T-Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. His family is extremely poor and cannot afford the huge expenditure of Rs. 8,00,000/- to undergo Chemotherapy at Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai. He needs your blessings and support. Donations sent by Ch/D.D. favouring **Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai will be acknowledged**. The donations sent through Ch/D.D/NEFT Transfer & GOOGLE PAY (Canara Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/c No. 60182010063310, IFSC No: CNRB0016018) favouring **WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE** is exempted under 80G IT.

All correspondence is done through **WWS**, Regd Public Charitable Trust, **Flat No. GF 1, Corddel Apartments, O.No.13, N.No. 29, Pycrofts Garden Lane, Chennai-600006. Ph: 044-42137401/ 28235324/ 7338978027. E-mail ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com**. Website: www.womenswelfaresyndicate.org.

WWS

An eventful year for Congress, but bigger challenges await

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The outgoing year has been a defining one for the Congress in many aspects.

The party held internal elections that witnessed the leadership baton being passed on to Mallikarjun Kharge, launched the ambitious Bharat Jodo Yatra and registered an electoral victory in Himachal Pradesh.

The party not only conducted internal elections for the first time in 22 years but also attempted to silence the Bharatiya Janata Party's consistent attack on the Congress that it could not choose anyone outside the Gandhi family to lead the party.

Mr. Kharge may have been seen as an "unofficial" nominee of the Gandhis, but the fact that the contender, Shashi Tharoor, managed to get over 1,000 votes in an electoral college of 9,000-odd delegates lent credibility to the electoral process.

A non-Gandhi at the helm of party affairs also allowed former party chief Rahul Gandhi to undertake his ambitious Bharat Jodo Yatra, a padyatra, the party claims, to fight "BJP's politics of hate".

"I did not see any violence or hate during the yatra, but when I watch TV (news), all I see violence and hatred," Mr. Gandhi said on Saturday, addressing a rally outside the Red Fort.

Though the Congress claims that the yatra is non-political, it is certainly being used to mobilise workers, infuse fresh energy into the organisation and change the narrative against Mr. Gandhi.

But the yatra's electoral impact is yet to be assessed.

Other than the challenge from regional parties, there is a growing challenge from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) that is seeking to fill the vacuum for a national alternative to the BJP.

The AAP not only dislodged the Congress in Punjab but also damaged it in Gujarat, where the party was decimated because of a split in the anti-BJP votes.

Going ahead, the electoral challenge in 2023 includes wresting back Mr. Kharge's home State of Karnataka and retaining Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. The leadership battle between Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot in Rajasthan is far from over and in Karnataka, too, the party faces intense factionalism between supporters of former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and party chief D.K. Shivakumar.

China, Pak. may jointly hit out at India, says Rahul

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said both China and Pakistan are together against India and may jointly hit out at the country sooner or later. During an interaction with ex-servicemen, he said India was "extremely vulnerable" and must act now or else, it would suffer a "huge setback". PTI

BJP expands its list of 'vulnerable' Lok Sabha seats from 144 to 160

Re-look factors in break-up with JD(U) and Shiv Sena; BJP office-bearers to meet in Hyderabad on Wednesday for more discussion on weak pockets; Modi likely to address workers in these seats

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

Taking stock: As per the BJP estimates, the party is vulnerable in 24 seats in West Bengal, 11 in Maharashtra and 10 in Bihar.

Changes in the array of constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and equations in Bihar and Maharashtra have compelled the BJP to increase its list of "vulnerable" seats in the Lok Sabha from 144 to 160 in the party's internal assessment.

The party has plans already in motion to pay extra attention to these seats in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Senior office-bearers of the party met during the recent session of Parliament for a review of the list of "vulnerable" Lok Sabha seats. They said the list should reflect the changed political equations since it was first drawn up in the middle of 2022, with an elaborate programme for Ministers in the Modi government to travel to at least three to five constituencies allotted to them to do organisational work and to enthuse the cadre.

In Bihar, the parting of ways between the BJP and the Janata Dal(U) and the formation of the seven-member *Mahagatbandhan* (grand alliance) of the JD (U), the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), the Congress and the Left parties has led to a rethink on seats which the party thinks it will have trouble winning in 2024.

The number has been raised from four in the earlier list to 10 in the updated one. Seats such as Nawada, Vaishali, Valmiki Nagar, Kishanganj, Katihar, Supaul, Munger, Jhanjharpur, Gaya and Purnea are on the list of vulnerable seats in Bihar.

In Maharashtra, the break-up of the BJP-Shiv Sena *Mahayuthi* or alliance and the split in the Shiv Sena into the factions led by Uddhav Thackeray and Eknath Shinde, respectively, has led to much bitterness and the possibility of grudge matches seem high.

A senior office-bearer of the BJP said that in seats such as Mumbai South Central, which under the old *Mahayuthi* arrangement was with the Shiv Sena, and has Rahul Shewale as the MP, the party is particularly vulnerable. "There is so much bad blood over Rahul Shewale, who is with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's faction, that the Uddhav Thackeray faction may yet hand over that seat to the Congress, for Varsha Gaikwad," said a source. "For Uddhav Thackeray, handing over Lok Sabha seats where the Congress or the NCP could beat the NDA is no big deal, as he is more interested in keeping Assembly and local body seats," said the source. Seats such as Shirdi, Ratnagiri and Maval, largely Sena-held, may fall in this category.

Patna review meet

On December 21, the national office-bearers of the BJP met in Patna for a two-day workshop with *vistaraks* or full-time party workers, who were dealing with 100 "vulnerable" Lok Sabha seats in States such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

Those who attended this meeting for review and training included party general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh, joint general secretary (organisation) Shiv Prakash, general secretary Sunil Bansal, and Bihar in-charge Vinod Tawde, and co-in-charge Harish Dwivedi.

A similar meeting is scheduled to be held in Hyderabad on December 28 for the the remaining 60 seats. Among those categorised as "vulnerable" seats, West Bengal has the largest with 24 seats, followed by Maharashtra with 11, Bihar 10, Uttar Pradesh 10, Assam five, Telangana five and Punjab three. Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat have one each, as do Tripura and Daman and Diu. The programme will subsequently include Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing workers in these seats in clusters of 40-45 seats ."With political equations likely to shift even more as 2024 nears, we expect that more seats could also be added to this list of vulnerable seats," said a senior office-bearer.

INBRIEF

Jairam elected leader of BJP Legislature Party in Himachal

The BJP on Sunday elected former Chief Minister Jairam Thakur as its leader in the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly. Mr. Thakur's name was finalised at a meeting held in Shimla.

"Former Chief Minister Jairam Thakur has been selected as the leader of the BJP Legislature Party in the Legislature Party meeting. His name was proposed by all 24 MLAs after which he was elected," BJP State in-charge Mangal Pandey said. He did a good job while in the government and under his supervision, the BJP will now take the Congress government head-on, which has started its work on a negative note," he added.

Centre established terror-free atmosphere in J&K: Chugh

Tarun Chugh, BJP national general secretary and Kashmir affairs in-charge, on Sunday said the Abdullahs, the Muftis and the Gandhis would not be allowed to push J&K into the "1990s situation". "All possible measures to bring peace, prosperity and development in the Union Territory are being implemented. New Delhi has established a terror-free atmosphere in Jammu & Kashmir. However, these dynastic political parties want to push Kashmir back to the 1990s," Mr. Chugh said. He said the Election Commission had already started preparations for the Assembly election. "We are hopeful that the Assembly polls will be conducted soon," he said.

Raut demands SIT probe against Governor Koshyari

Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday sought to know why no Special Investigation Team (SIT) had been constituted against Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari for "insulting" Chhatrapati Shivaji. Mr. Raut also said the real reason the Eknath Shinde government had ordered an SIT probe into the death of Disha Salian (former talent manager of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput) was to stifle the Opposition for speaking out on issues such as the Governor's "insult" to Chhatrapati Shivaji, the Maharashtra-Karnataka boundary row, and the Chief Minister's alleged involvement in the Nagpur land scam case.

J&K parties support relocation of Kashmiri Pandits to Jammu

The Democratic Azad Party (DAP), the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan (DSS) have supported the demand of Kashmiri Pandits to relocate them from the Valley to Jammu province. "Our Pandit brethren have been protesting for several months after facing attacks in Kashmir. All they demand is safety and the government should consider their demands," DAP chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad said. PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti asked the administration to have a patient hearing and redress their grievances.

BSP looks to galvanise 'old' Dalit-EBC combination in U.P.

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

With the recent appointment of Vishwanath Pal, belonging to the Gadariya community, as its Uttar Pradesh State president, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is eyeing a revival of its Extremely Backward Caste vote bank and return to the Muslim-Dalit-EBC calculus for the Assembly election in 2027.

The party has realised that despite its multiple attempts, the Brahmin community, which helped it emerge victorious in 2007, is likely to remain with the ruling BJP.

Announcing the elevation of Mr. Pal, BSP supremo Mayawati highlighted his EBC roots, and hoped that the appointment would help the BSP in bringing the numerically significant caste groups under the party's fold.

Mr. Pal, a native of Ayodhya, replaces Bhim Rajbhar, who has been appointed the coordinator of Bihar. There is a sizeable number of Gadariya community members in central and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Changing strategy: People at a rally of BSP supremo Mayawati, in Uttar Pradesh. FILE PHOTO

Historic low

In the political corridors of the State, it is being argued that after reaching a historic low in the 2022 Assembly election, the BSP's best bet was to galvanise the old combination of the early 1990s, when along with Dalits, it brought a section of EBC groups within its umbrella. This resulted in the BSP becoming a formidable force in Uttar Pradesh.

In 1995 and 1997, Bhagwat Pal and Dayaram Pal, two EBC leaders, were at the helm of the party in the State, helping it make inroads into the EBC groups, and denting the Mandal formula of the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the BJP's non-Yadav OBC 'outreach' through Kalyan Singh.

All the recent actions of the BSP such as the appointment of Imran Masood, an influential Muslim face as the west U.P. coordinator, the appointment of Mr. Pal, the continuous attack of Ms. Mayawati on the SP and reaching out to the Muslim community are aimed at transforming Uttar Pradesh into a three-cornered electoral contest.

The recent State Assembly election verdict indicated that Uttar Pradesh has moved towards a bipolar contest with the SP emerging as the sole challenger to the ruling BJP.

Analysts believe it will be a challenging task for the BSP to make inroads, as the caste groups comprising the EBCs have moved towards the BJP or the SP in the recent decade. Since the 2017 Assembly election, the party has experimented by appointing Muslim and OBC leaders in key positions, but it has not helped in stopping the downslide. "Vishwanath Pal is not a known EBC leader. Now symbolic appointments hardly works. The BSP has made an attempt to reach out to the EBC castes through Mr. Pal, but until you don't have a robust organisational structure and connect with the ground, this will not work," said Shashi Kant Pandey, a political scientist who teaches in Central University, Lucknow.

Congress worker's tweet on Vajpayee sparks controversy

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Congress functionary on Sunday courted controversy after he called former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee a "British informer" during the Quit India movement. The remark has come a day before Rahul Gandhi's scheduled visit to the late leader's memorial.

In a tweet, Gaurav Pandhi, who is attached to the office of party president Mallikarjun Kharge, said, "In 1942, like all other members of the RSS, Atal Bihari Vajpayee boycotted the Quit India movement and worked as a British informer reporting against those who participated in the *andolan*."

"Be it Nellie massacre or demolition of Babri, Vajpayee played an important role in inciting mobs. There is a reason why BJP leaders today always liken Modi with Gandhi, Patel or other Congress leaders and not Savarkar, Vajpayee or Golwalkar. They know the truth!," the tweet said.

A senior Congress leader told *The Hindu* that the tweet was "unwarranted" and there is no change in Mr. Gandhi's plan to visit Vajpayee's memorial.

BJP leader Jitin Prasada questioned whether Mr. Pandhi's comments have the official sanction of the Congress party.

KARNATAKA URBAN WATER SUPPLY & DRAINAGE BOARD
Jalbhavan, BTM Layout, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore - 560 029. Phone : 080 – 4110 6505
e-mail:cekwbbng@gmail.com Website: https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in
KWB/TEC/CE(B)/AE-3/HSK-UGD/1748/2022-23 Dated: 23.12.2022

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through Electronic Procurement portal only)

The tender for the following work is invited (two cover system) through e-Procurement from eligible agencies as detailed below:

Name and description of work: **Construction of 1.82 MLD STP, Providing sewer network of SWG/RCC NP3 pipe along with House service connection, Supply, Erection, Electrification of Sewage pumpsets and DG sets along with power line and commissioning through Design, Build and Transfer (DBT) Mode-Lumpsum-no variation under UGD scheme to Hosakote City. Work Indent No: KUWSDB/2022-23/WS/WORK_INDENT3255.** Approximate value of work in (Rs.): **10.16 crores. (excluding GST)** Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.)**: 15,00,000.** Tender Processing fee (Rs.): **As per e-procurement portal.**

Calendar of Events: (1) Documents will be available from: **26-12-2022. (2)** Last Date & Time for seeking Queries / Clarifications: **11-01-2023 at 11:00 a.m. (3)** Date of Pre bid meeting: **11-01-2023 at 11:30 a.m. (4)** Last date and time for submission / uploading of the tender in the e-procurement portal: **25-01-2023 upto 5:30 p.m. (5)** Date and time for opening of Technical bid: **30-01-2023 after 11:00 a.m. (6)** Date and time for opening of Financial bid: **03-02-2023 after 11:00 a.m.**

For further details, the Office of the Chief Engineer (B), KUWS&D Board, Bengaluru, may please be contacted or website **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in** or e-Procurement helpdesk 080-22371090 / 22373788, email support: **hphelpdesk.blr@intarvo.com.**

Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER (B),
DIPR/CP/RO3713/AAPL/2022-23 KUWS & D BOARD, BENGALURU

OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT, SMS HOSPITAL, JAIPUR.
(Swai Ram Singh Road, Tonk Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan-302004)
No. F-10(744)/contract/MWM/smsh/2022-23/9609 Dated 12/12/2022

NOTICE INVITING BID
(NIB No 9609 dated 12/12/22)

Bids for hiring the Services of Computer operator with Computer with printer and UPS on rent (List Attached) for Two years rate contract are invited from interested bidders up to 27/1/23 on 05. PM Other particulars of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (**http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in** or **http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in**) of the state.

(UBN NO. MCJ2223SLRC00118)

DIPR/C/16091 Medical Superintendent

RAJASTHAN MEDICAL EDUCATION SOCIETY, JAIPUR
(DIRECTORATE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION)
Govind Marg, Opp. Psychiatric Hospital, Jaipur)
No. F.3(112)/Raj-MES/accts/Skill Lab./2021/15120 Dated : 20/12/2022

Time Extension Notice
NIB No. 60/2022-23

The Schedule of dates for E-Tender Notice Inviting No. F.3(112)/Raj-MES/accts/Skill Lab./2021/14250 dt. 15.11.2022 (Notice inviting Bid No. 60/2022-23) for Rate contract for the Establishment of Skill Lab Including supply of Furniture and Turnkey Work at Raj-MES Medical Colleges are now being extended as below:-

S. No.	Description	Previous Date & Time	Amended Date & Time
1	Bid Submission End Date	20.12.2022 6.00 PM	23.01.2023 6.00 PM
2	Submission of Demand Draft/Banker Cheque for Tender Fee, Processing fees and Bid Security Amount (as per applicability) At the office of Director, Rajasthan Medical Education Society, Jaipur).	20.12.2022 6.00 PM	23.01.2023 6.00 PM
3	Technical Bid Opening Date	21.12.2022 11.00 AM	24.01.2023 11.00 AM

Above mentioned Detailed tender notice and documents can be seen on website **http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in**

UBN : MES2223GLRC00077

DIPR/C/16503 Director Raj-MES

Government of Rajasthan
Local Self Government Department
(Directorate of Local Bodies, Rajasthan, Jaipur)
G-3, Rajmahal Residency, Near Civil lines, Railway Crossing, Jaipur
Tel No.: +91 141 2222469 Fax No.: + 91 141 2222403
web site : www.lsg.urban.rajasthan.gov.in
No. F 55 () PA/CE/DLB/SBM2.0/Legacywaste-C&Dwaste/2022/123599
Date 12/12/2022

Notice Inviting Bids (NIB)

Online Technical and Financial Bids in Single Stage two envelopes are invited on behalf of Governor of Rajasthan by Directorate of Local Bodies for Dump site legacy waste remediation as per SWM Rules 2016 as ammended time to time and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) 2.0 guidelines for clusters 5 (for 118 towns) and Establishment of C&D waste processing plants in 5 cities **up to 18.01.2023.**

Others particulars of the bid may be visited on the Procurement Portal **(http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in)** of the State; and LSG Department website. The approximate value ot the procurement is **Rs 173.20 Cr and 24 Cr.**

UBN No: DLB2223WLOB22710 & DLB2223WLOB22711

DIPR/C/16143 Director-cum Joint Secretary

RAJASTHAN MEDICAL EDUCATION SOCIETY, JAIPUR
(DIRECTORATE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION)
Govind Marg, Opp. Psychiatric Hospital, Jaipur
No. F. No.6(56)Raj-MES/Store/CT-Scan-Proc./2022/15124
Dated: 20/12/2022

Time Extension Notice
NIB No. 54/2022-23

The Schedule of dates for E-Tender Notice Inviting No. F.No.6(56)Raj-MES/Store/CT-Scan-Proc./2022/13791 dt. 20.10.2022 (Notice inviting Bid No. 54/2022-23) for The Turnkey Project For Supply & Installation of 128-Slice Dual Energy CT - Scanner With State Of Art Advanced Technology For Raj - MES Medical Colleges are now being extended as below:-

S. No.	Description	Previous Date & Time	Amended Date & Time
1.	Bid Submission End Date	22.12.2022 6.00 PM	10.01.2023 6.00 PM
2.	Submission of Demand Draft/Banker Cheque for Tender Fee, Processing fees and Bid Security Amount (as per applicability) At the office of Director. Rajasthan Medical Education Society, Jaipur	22.12.2022 6.00 PM	10.01.2023 6.00 PM
3.	Technical Bid Opening Date	23.12.2022 11.00 AM	11.01.2023 11.00 AM

Above mentioned Detailed tender notice and documents can be seen on website http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in

UBN : MES2223GLOB00073 Director
DIPR/C/16502 Raj-MES

INBRIEF

14 monuments, sites declared protected in 3 years: Minister

The Janardana Temple in Kerala's Wayanad, the Haveli of Agah Khan in Agra, Uttar Pradesh and Gonpa complex in Ladakh are among the 14 ancient sites which have been declared protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) over the past three years. The list was shared by Culture Minister G. Kishan Reddy in the Rajya Sabha. He also said the government had provided ₹15,622 lakh over the last three years as grant to zonal cultural committees to strengthen micro-culture in the country. Out of this, ₹5,881.46 lakh was allotted in 2021-22.

BSP chief flays fundamentalist politics over conversions

While extending greetings for Christmas, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati on Sunday targeted the fundamentalist politics practised in the country over religious conversion. She claimed that the politics played in India over religion harms the country big time."The way in the name of 'religious conversion', ruckus is created in the country is wrong and worrying... Due to the fundamentalist politics practised in this regard, the country gains less and also loses more," Ms. Mayawati said in a Tweet.

Police arrest co-actor in Tunisha Sharma case

Press Trust of India
PALGHAR

The police on Sunday arrested actor Sheezan M. Khan, 27, on the charge of abetting the suicide of co-actor Tunisha Sharma, 21, an official said. She allegedly died by suicide on the set of a serial in the Vasai area here in Maharashtra on Saturday.

Based on a complaint filed by Sharma's mother, the Valiv police registered a case against Khan, under Section 306 (abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code. Mr. Khan was later produced before a magistrate who remanded him in police custody for four days, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Tulinj) Chandrakant Jadhav said.

Sharma was found dead on Saturday on a set where the shooting of the serial *Ali Baba: Dastaan-E-Kabul* was in progress. Her mother, in her complaint, claimed Sharma and Mr. Khan were in love and blamed the latter for her daughter's extreme step, the police said.

No suicide note was found at the spot, the official added.

Celebrate festivals, but take COVID-19 precautions: Modi

In the year's last *Mann Ki Baat* address, PM touched upon achievements of the country, and said India gained new momentum in 2022, and enthusiasm has to reach new heights for G-20 summit

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday extended season's greetings to people, urging them to be a little cautious while celebrating the festivals, given the increase in number of COVID-19 cases in many countries.

"I wish you all the best for the year 2023. May this year also be special for the country, may the country keep touching new heights, and together we have to take a resolution as well to make it come true," Mr. Modi said during his *Mann Ki Baat* radio address. "In 2023, we have to take the enthusiasm of G-20 to new heights, make this event a mass movement," he said.

Wishing "Merry Christmas", Mr. Modi said it was a day to remember the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. He paid tributes to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary.

In memoriam: The Prime Minister pays tribute to Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Mr. Modi said the country had gained a new momentum in 2022, becoming the world's fifth largest economy; surpassing the figure of 220 crore vaccinations; crossing the exports figure of $400 billion; adopting the resolution of "self-reliant India"; welcoming the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier *INS Vikrant*; and also achieving new landmarks in various fields.

"The people of the country also organised many amazing events to celebrate unity and togetherness, be it the Madhavpur Mela in Gujarat, where Rukmini's marriage and Lord Krishna's relationship with Northeast India is celebrated, or the Kashi-Tamil Sangamam – many colours of unity were visible in these festivals...who can forget the *Har Ghar Tiranga* campaign organised in the month of August!" he said.

Mr. Modi said on December 26, *Veer Bal Diwas*, he would participate in a programme dedicated to the martyrdom of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh in Delhi.

Taking up the issue of evidence-based research, the Prime Minister said yoga and Ayurveda were now standing up to the touchstone of tests of the modern era.

He said the Tata Memorial Centre in Mumbai had found that regular yoga practice reduced the risk of recurrence and death in breast cancer patients by 15%.

On the countrywide cleanliness drive, the Prime Minister praised Sange Sherpa of Sikkim's Thegu village, who has been engaging in the work of environmental protection for the past 14 years. Supported by fellow villagers, he had taken up the task of keeping the Tsomgo (Somgo) lake clean.

The Prime Minister appreciated the works of Quemashree from Gadak, who has been working on the revival of art and culture in Karnataka.

Huge quantity of arms seized near LoC in J&K: Army

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

The Army on Sunday said the security forces have seized a huge quantity of arms and ammunition close to the Line of Control (LoC), in north Kashmir's Baramulla, and described it as "a major success".

An Army spokesman said search operation along with the police was launched in Uri's Hathlanga Nala around 6.15 a.m. on Saturday, which lasted about eight hours.

"The seized war-like stores included eight AK series rifles along with 24 magazines and 560 live rounds, 12 Chinese pistols along with 24 magazines and 244 live rounds, nine Chinese hand grenades and five Pakistani hand grenades. The recovery also included 81 balloons with markings of 'I Love Pakistan' with the Pakistani flag along with five gunny bags with Pakistani markings," the Army said.

Meanwhile, the Army said militants' numbers had come down in J&K and "the remaining ones are facing an ammunition shortage".

Sania Mirza of U.P. on the flight path to be India's first Muslim woman fighter pilot

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

If all goes well, Sania Mirza, daughter of a TV mechanic from Jasovar village in Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh, may become India's first Muslim woman fighter pilot after she cleared the National Defence Academy (NDA) examination with an overall rank of 149.

Chasing dreams: Sania Mirza was inspired by Flight Lieutenant Avani Chaturvedi to become a fighter pilot. PTI

After the declaration of the results, many reports recently claimed that India will get its first Muslim woman fighter pilot, which forced the Indian Air Force (IAF) to issue a statement that the chances of Ms. Mirza becoming an IAF fighter pilot will depend on her completing successfully multiple courses.

"Assuming that the young woman received joining instructions for NDA, it would take four years from now for her to be commissioned as a pilot in the IAF. She will have to successfully complete the designated training for the flying branch and have the aptitude and merit to make it as a fighter pilot," the statement issued by the IAF read.

The IAF extended best wishes to Ms. Mirza for her successful future and hoped her dreams come true.

Ms. Mirza, a student of Guru Nanak Girls' Inter College, was the district topper in the U.P. Board's Class 12 examination. Ms. Mirza had said she wants the younger generation to get inspired by her, like how she was inspired by Flight Lieutenant Avani Chaturvedi, who was among the three women inducted into the IAF as combat pilot. She is one of the two women selected in the flying branch and will join the training course in Pune.

CPCB report shows fewer polluted river stretches, but worst ones remain unchanged

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The number of polluted stretches in India's rivers has fallen from 351 in 2018 to 311 in 2022, though the number of most polluted stretches is practically unchanged, according to a report from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in November but made public this week.

The CPCB network monitors water quality at 4,484 locations across the country.

Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) exceeding 3 milligrams per litre (mg/l) is identified as polluted locations. Two or more polluted locations identified on a river in a continuous sequence are considered as a "polluted river stretch." A BOD less than 3 mg/l means the river stretch is fit for "outdoor bathing."

Further, stretches with BOD exceeding 30 mg/l are considered "Priority 1" (P1), meaning, the most polluted and thus needing the most urgent remediation. There are five such categories with "Priority 2" (P2) indicating a BOD of 20-30 mg/l and "Priority 5" (P5) indicating 3-6 mg/l. The success of river-cleaning programmes are measured by the number of stretches moving from 1 to 2, 2 to 3 until those in 5 (requiring the least action) too reduce.

Easy remedy: All of the improvement were in river stretches that required less intervention.RAJEEV BHATT

In 2018, when the CPCB published its report (after analysing stretches in 2016 and 2017), there were 45 stretches categorised in P1, 16 in P2, 43 in P3, 72 in P4 and 175 in P5. The latest report counts 46 in P1, 16 in P2, 39 in P3, 65 in P4 and 145 in P5. All of the improvement thus, were in river stretches that required relatively less intervention.

"No change/slight change in P1 and 2 category of polluted river stretches indicates that further stringent actions are required for control of organic pollution from various point sources of pollution including development of infrastructure and its proper operation for treatment of wastewater before discharge into recipient water bodies," the CPCB report observes.

While Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of "Priority 1" river stretches (6), Maharashtra had the most polluted river stretches of 55, followed by Madhya Pradesh (19), Bihar (18), Kerala (18), Karnataka (17) and Uttar Pradesh (17).

Following a report published in *The Hindu* in 2018, the National Green Tribunal passed orders that the CPCB and the Jal Shakti Ministry monitor river pollution and ensure that it was dealt with. Every State had to ensure that at least one river stretch was "restored" to at least be fit for bathing.

To questions on the status of river-pollution abatement efforts by States, Minister Prahlad Patel said pollution abatement work had been implemented in 36 rivers in 80 towns, spread over 16 States at a total cost of ₹6,248.16 crore, and a sewage treatment capacity of 2,745.7 million litres per day (MLD) has been created.

"Under the Central Sector Scheme of *Namami Gange*, 406 projects, including 176 projects for sewage treatment of 5,270 MLD and a sewer network of 5,214 km, have been sanctioned at a cost of ₹32,898 crore against which sewage treatment capacity of 1,858 MLD has been created so far," he said in a statement.

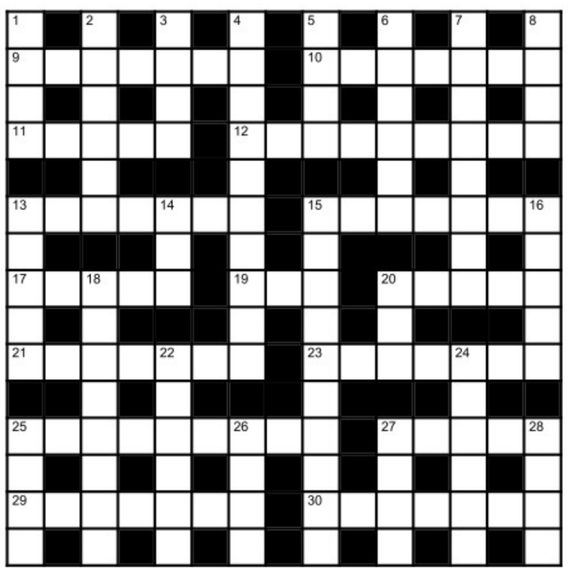
The CPCB, in its report, added the overall decrease in the net number of identified polluted river stretches, which have shown improvement in water quality, "could be attributed" to the efforts done for infrastructure development for pollution control.

TH CROSSWORD + 13746

(set by Vidwan)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

9 Real-life Mrs Bond's real nuts about tea (7)
10 Plain ignorant? Not plain at times! (7)
11 Special agency for terrorism cases returns to state (5)
12 Provide enclosure reportedly for howling (9)
13 Visionary criminal made errors occasionally (7)
15 Fond of a party circuit (7)
17 One without love's anxious, not good being deprived! (5)
19 Company 1011 (3)
20 The Supreme Poet died on stake (5)
21 A large firm, completely unrestrained, making liquor (7)
23 Motivated and heartless idiot in India (7)
25 Firm mostly operating around one partner (9)
27 Teaching unknown, new English 'trading' words (5)
29 Shaken public prosecutor released one on bail (7)
30 Case judgement's applied regularly (7)

Down

1 Reportedly makes vessels (5)
2 Bare lover's engaging, exotic act and a short period of celebration (7)
3 End of the forgotten long story (4)
4 Currently commonest form of power (11)
5 Sudden leap partly crossing space and time (4)
6 Superfluous party may go too far (6)
7 Place where India and Pak armies face each other - state with truncated western boundary (8)
8 Some disillusioned jihadi group (4)
13 Party for a girl or a lady from Italy (5)
14 Girl's expression of wish (3)
15 Iran's base? Possibly a part of Indian Ocean (7,3)
16 Desire is what is required to get into Harvard English Department (5)
18 English armyman like Subedar-Major, one welcomed by silent applause (8)
20 Old man in Disneyland advertisement (3)
22 Hot ground below the fireplace! (6)
24 Cho and this film = cacophony! (6)
25 Ghanaian currency is partly receding (4)
26 Explosive side of bombs (4)
27 Half of that arid part lies in Rajasthan (4)
28 Gather around and pour (4)

SUDOKU

			2		4	9		
9		1	8		5	6		
							1	
		9		4			6	
3	6						9	7
	5			6		2		
	7							
		6	5		1	7		4
		8	4		7			

No.SS5660 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

	M	I	X	E	D	B	L	E	S	S	I	N	G	
		C		X		E		X		O		E		
G	E	E	U	P		A	P	A	T	H	E	T	I	C
O		P		A		T		M		O		B		H
U	N	A	R	T	I	S	T	I	C		R	A	T	A
P		C		R				N		P		L		R
I	N	K	L	I	N	G		E	A	R	P	L	U	G
N				A		O		E		O				E
S	A	L	U	T	E	D		S	I	S	S	I	E	S
M		E		E		H				T		M		H
O	A	S	T		D	E	T	A	C	H	A	B	L	E
K		B		A		L		L		E		I		E
E	P	I	S	C	O	P	A	L			S	A	B	O	T
		A		E		U		O		I		E		
	O	N	T	H	E	S	A	F	E	S	I	D	E	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

2	9	1	3	4	5	6	7	8
4	6	5	9	8	7	3	1	2
8	3	7	6	1	2	9	5	4
6	8	4	5	7	9	2	3	1
7	2	9	8	3	1	4	6	5
1	5	3	2	6	4	7	8	9
5	7	6	4	9	8	1	2	3
3	4	2	1	5	6	8	9	7
9	1	8	7	2	3	5	4	6

FAITH

The three modes of worship

Hearing Godly deeds and stories is called Sravanam. Thinking and meditating about Him is called Smaranam. Seeing His different forms of image is known as Darsanam – these are the three most common mediums of deriving the blessings. Through hearing stories like the Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavatham, devotion can be developed. Those who don't control their mind will develop hateracy towards men and materials. The mind which is goaded with infatuation should not be allowed to stray. Mind can be controlled through Smaranam. The eyes given to us are to see His divine forms. Thiruppanazhwar says in Amalanadhipiran that his eyes will not see anything other than God.

The divine consort comes along with God in His manifestations donning a perfect match. In the Ramavathara, Lord as Rama was all composed, serene and tranquil. Goddess as Sita equally matched Him. While in Asokavanam, it would have taken no time for Sita to overpower Ravana and reduce him to ashes. But she was all composed and calm undergoing penance for Rama to come.

Goddess Mahalakshmi had incarnated as Rukmini to match the flamboyance of Sri Krishna. When her brother Rukmi proposed Sisubala, Rukmini was unnerved and managed to inform Sri Krishna through a letter urging Him to come and marry her. In the letter, Rukmini called Krishna as "Bhuvanasundara" – the handsome of the whole universe. Coming to Vidarbha and defeating Rukmi, Krishna wanted to tether in the chariot wheel and drag him. But the grace of the divine mother pleaded with the Lord and Rukmi was let off with a small humiliation, Sri Hariji said in a discourse about Rukmini Kalyanam.

BANDA ACEH

Rohingya refugee boat lands in Indonesia after a month at sea

AFP

A broken-down boat carrying 57 Rohingya refugees landed on Indonesia's western coast on Sunday after a month at sea. Thousands of the mostly Muslim Rohingya, heavily persecuted in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, risk their lives on long, expensive sea journeys in an attempt to reach Malaysia or Indonesia. AFP

ISTANBUL

Erdogan aide blames Paris unrest after shooting on PKK militants

AP

A top aide to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan blamed the street unrest that gripped Paris following the killing of three Kurds, on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party militants. The protest broke out on Friday after a 69-year-old white French gunman opened fire at a Kurdish cultural centre in Paris, killing three. AFP

VATICAN CITY

At Christmas, Pope Francis urges end to 'senseless' Ukraine war

REUTERS

Pope Francis appealed for an end to the "senseless" war in Ukraine, in his traditional Christmas Day message. The head of the Catholic Church addressed thousands of people gathered at St. Peter's Square, some of them holding Ukrainian flags, before delivering the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing ("to the city and the world"). AFP

MALE

Former Maldives leader gets 11 years for money laundering, bribe

AP

A court in Maldives on Sunday found the former President guilty of money laundering and accepting a bribe and sentenced him to 11 years in prison. The Criminal Court of Maldives also ordered Abdulla Yameen to pay a fine of $5 million. The court found Yameen guilty of accepting money for leasing an island owned by the government. AP

Millions in U.S. hunker down from deadly monster storm

At least 24 killed and power outages reported across the country, forecasters attribute blizzard to a bomb cyclone which is formed when atmospheric pressure drops quickly in a storm

Associated Press
BUFFALO

Millions of people hunkered down against a deep freeze Sunday morning to ride out the frigid storm that has killed at least 24 people across the U.S. and is expected to claim more lives after trapping some residents inside houses with heaping snow drifts and knocking out power to several hundred thousand homes and businesses.

The scope of the storm has been nearly unprecedented, stretching from the Great Lakes near Canada to the Rio Grande along the border with Mexico. About 60% of the U.S. population faced some sort of winter weather advisory or warning, and temperatures plummeted drastically below normal from east of the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians, the National Weather Service said.

Frigid conditions: A man tries to dig out his car after he got stuck in a snowdrift in Buffalo, New York, on Saturday. AP

Some 1,346 domestic and international flights were canceled as of early Sunday, according to the tracking site *FlightAware*.

Forecasters said a bomb cyclone – when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm – developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions, including heavy winds and snow.

The storm unleashed its full fury on Buffalo, with hurricane-force winds and snow causing whiteout conditions, paralysing emergency response efforts – New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said almost every fire truck in the city was stranded on Saturday – and shutting down the airport through Tuesday morning, according to officials. The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 109 centimetres at 7 a.m. on Sunday.

Daylight on Sunday revealed cars nearly covered by 6-foot snowdrifts and thousands of houses, some adorned in unlit holiday displays, dark from a lack of power.

Two people died in their suburban Cheektowaga, New York, homes on Friday when emergency crews could not reach them in time to treat their medical conditions, and another died in Buffalo. Four more deaths were confirmed overnight, bringing the total to seven in Erie County, where County Executive Mark Poloncarz warned there may be more dead.

The storm knocked out power in communities from Maine to Seattle. But heat and lights were steadily being restored across the U.S. According to *poweroutage.us*, less than 3,00,000 customers were without power at 8 a.m. EDT Sunday - down from a peak of 1.7 million.

Four foreign NGOs stop work in Afghanistan after Taliban ban on women staff

Associated Press
KABUL

Four major international aid groups on Sunday suspended their operations in Afghanistan following a decision by the country's Taliban rulers to ban women from working at non-governmental organisations.

Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE said they cannot effectively reach children, women and men in desperate need in Afghanistan without the women in their workforces. The NGO ban was introduced a day earlier, allegedly because women weren't wearing the Islamic headscarf correctly.

Wilted dreams: An Afghan burkha-clad woman sits in a parked taxi along the roadside in Kandahar on Sunday. AFP

The four NGOs are providing healthcare, education, child protection and nutrition services and support amid plummeting humanitarian conditions.

"We have complied with all cultural norms and we simply can't work without our dedicated women staff, who are essential for us to access women who are in desperate need of assistance," Neil Turner, the Norwegian Refugee Council's chief for Afghanistan, said. He said the group has 468 women staff in the country.

Amid crisis, King Charles hails public's 'solidarity'

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

King Charles III has hailed the "heartfelt solidarity" of people across the recession-hit U.K. struggling with a worsening cost of living crisis, in his first Christmas Day message as monarch.

Addressing the country from the Windsor Castle chapel where his mother, Elizabeth II, was interred in September, the 74-year-old also thanked people for the "love and sympathy" expressed following her death.

He then turned to the impact of the country's growing economic woes, as decades-high inflation eats into earnings and escalates strikes over pay across sectors.

China stages drills around Taiwan citing provocation

Reuters
BEIJING/TAIPEI

China's military said it had conducted "strike drills" in the sea and airspace around Taiwan on Sunday in response to what it said was provocation from the democratically governed island and the U.S.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, said the drills showed Beijing was destroying regional peace and trying to cow Taiwan's people.

China on Saturday condemned the U.S. for a new defence authorisation law that boosts military assistance for Taiwan.

In a brief statement, the Eastern Theatre Command of China's People's Liberation Army said it had carried out "joint combat readiness patrols and joint firepower strike drills" around Taiwan, though it did not specify the exact location.

Putin says Russia is ready to negotiate over Ukraine crisis

Reuters
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was ready to negotiate with all parties involved in the war in Ukraine but that Kyiv and its Western backers had refused to engage in talks.

Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine has triggered the most deadly conflict in Europe since the Second World War and the biggest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. There is, thus far, little end in sight to the war.

The Kremlin says it will fight until all its aims are achieved while Kyiv says it will not rest until every Russian soldier is ejected from its territory, including Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014.

"We are ready to negotiate with everyone involved about acceptable solutions, but that is up to them – we are not the ones refusing to negotiate," Mr. Putin said in an interview.

Vladimir Putin

Mr. Putin said Russia was acting in the "right direction" in Ukraine because the West, led by the U.S., was trying to cleave Russia apart. "We are acting in the right direction, we are defending our national interests, the interests of our citizens. And we have no other choice but to protect our citizens," Mr. Putin said.

China stops publishing daily COVID figures

Reuters
BEIJING

China's National Health Commission (NHC) stopped publishing daily COVID-19 data on Sunday, amid doubts about their reliability as infections have exploded in the wake of an abrupt easing of tough restrictions.

"Relevant COVID information will be published by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention for reference and research," the commission said. It did not cite reasons or say how frequently China CDC will update COVID information.

The NHC's halt to reporting daily infection comes as concerns grow around the lack of vital information since Beijing made sweeping changes to a zero-COVID policy that put millions of its citizens under lockdowns and battered the economy.

Six Army personnel killed in Balochistan

Press Trust of India
KARACHI

At least six Army personnel including an officer, were killed on Sunday in two separate clashes with militants in Pakistan's troubled southwestern Balochistan province.

Separately, 15 people were injured in a series of grenade attacks carried out by militants in different parts of the province.

No one has claimed responsibility for the five attacks so far.

U.S. warns of possible attack in Islamabad

Associated Press
ISLAMABAD

The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad on Sunday warned its staff of a possible attack on Americans at a top hotel in Pakistan's capital as the city was already on high alert following a suicide bombing earlier in the week. The U.S. government is aware of information that "unknown individuals are plotting to attack Americans at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad," the embassy said in an alert.

THE HINDU GROUP

FRONTLINE
LEADING THE DEBATE SINCE 1984

For art's sake!

India's public museums are gathering dust. The country needs to pay more attention to the upkeep of heritage. Is it prepared to do so? Frontline takes stock.

Under siege. Is the prestigious Jadavpur University running out of funds?

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A BG-BGE

ASKUS

K. Nitya Kalyani

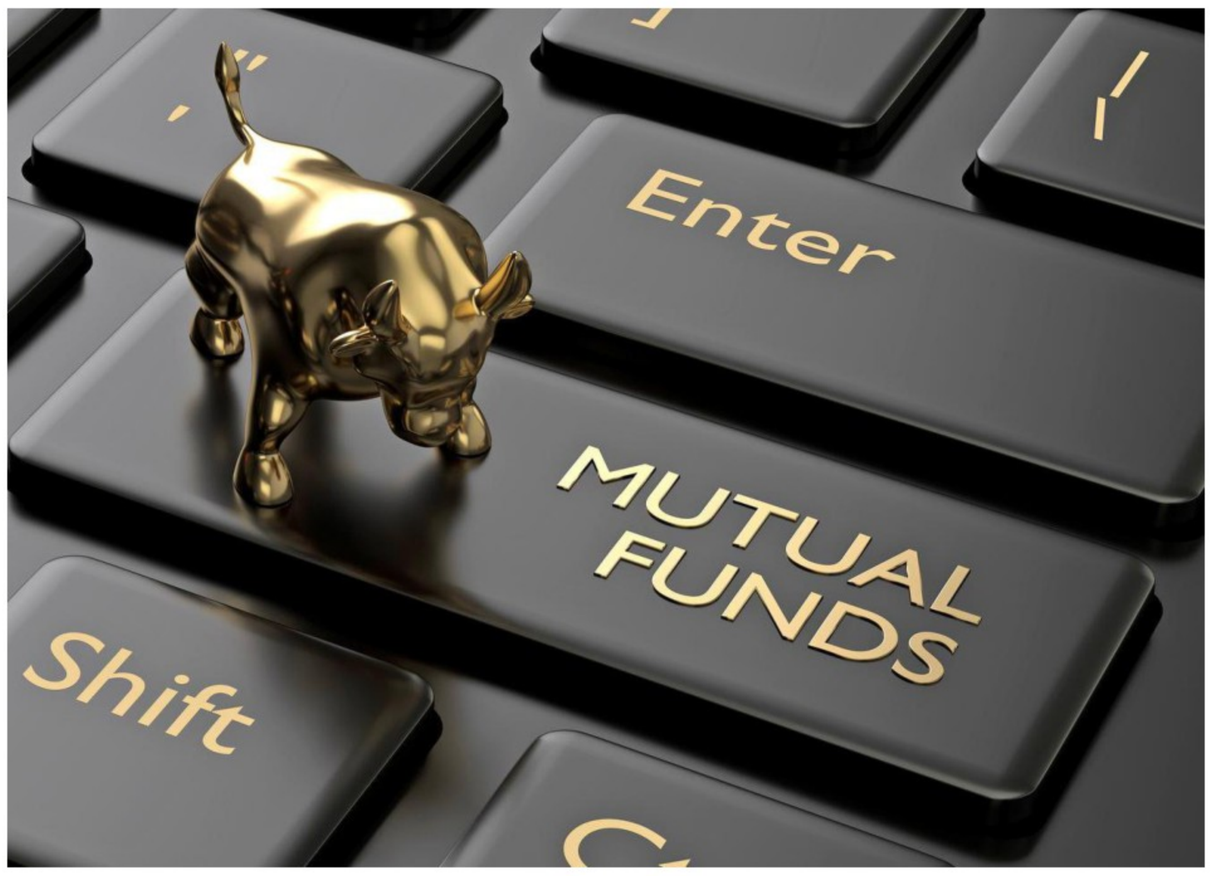
Q I retired from a bank and the group health insurance policy is due for renewal. The Indian Banks Association's floater policy has certain stipulations. One, a floater cover is compulsory if both husband and wife are alive and two, the premium is raised annually, which is unaffordable for retirees. Coverage of ₹9lakh/ ₹7 lakh for retired officer/award staff costs ₹72,000 per year for current renewal.
If in a year, the policy amount is exhausted, no coverage is available for the spouse. Only if you opt for the maximum sum insured in this base policy can you subscribe for the super top up.
My questions are: Is there any provision to have more than one health policy for the same person. Can we go for the family floater policy and a separate health policy for spouse?
K. NAGARAJAN

A person can have more than one hospitalisation policy. If you take the ₹9 lakh floater cover you can take a separate policy for a sum insured of choosing for your wife. This will come to your aid in the situation you described where the ₹9 lakh is exhausted for hospitalisation costs and you need to claim for wife's hospitalisation in the same policy year. If only your wife needs hospitalisation, claiming under her policy is logical leaving the floater policy sum insured intact for your use.
Group policies have stipulations and some may suit us while we wish other conditions were not there. But it's a package deal and comes with an optimum set of coverages and attendant conditions. On premium, you will find an individual policy with ditto coverage would cost significantly more. This is because of the power of collective bargaining, economies of scale and the cost efficiency of marketing and administration for the insurance company.
So, your best strategy would be to take the maximum cover under the group policy and becoming eligible for the super top up, too.
Some insurers do have policies sans sub-limits, and this is a good option to maximise your premium's worth. Your agent would be best placed to guide you about this and there is a lot of information on the internet too on the websites of each insurance company.

Q I am a state government pensioner aged 74. I have medical insurance for ₹5 lakh from state government pensioners group insurance scheme. I also have a personal health insurance policy for ₹1.5 lakh. Please clarify whether I can avail benefits under both simultaneously.
GOVINDARAJAN N.

A Yes, you can avail of benefits under two different health policies or schemes simultaneously. It works like this. If your claim is less than ₹1.5 lakh, claim under your personal policy. This way you conserve the Sum Insured under the group policy for future claims in the policy year.
On the other hand, if the group policy offers a cover your personal policy doesn't, and your claim comes under that, then claim under group policy. For example, if dental treatment is covered under your pensioners group policy but not under the personal policy, claim it under the former.
Other example of this is if you haven't worked out your pre-existing conditions waiting period under one policy but the other policy is conducive to a claim. If the hospital you choose to take treatment in comes under one, but not the other insurance company's hospital network.
What if you can claim under both policies. It is entirely up to you to choose which policy to claim under. You can even claim partially under one and the balance under the other. Unless there is a good reason for it, try restricting the claim to one or the other so that you conserve no-claim benefits. What you cannot do is claim the same expense from both policies since all claims are against bills. If one of the policies is a benefit policy and the other, an indemnity policy, you can claim under both policies. The benefit policy will pay a lumpsum benefit on diagnosis of the specified illness regardless of the expenses incurred while the indemnity policy will pay all the bills.
(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.



The ONE change your MF portfolio needs in 2023

Passive investing, both through ETFs and index funds, has been very slowly gaining ground. But fund houses are clearly anticipating a big shift

MUTUAL FUNDS

Vidya Bala

The year 2022 saw a number of new products emerge in both the equity and debt mutual fund space. These products stand out for the following distinct features – low cost and reduced need to manage portfolio. They are passive funds – ETFs and index funds.

Passive investing, both through ETFs and index funds, has been very slowly gaining ground. But fund houses are clearly anticipating a big shift. The number of passive fund launches in 2022 (read this article http://bit.ly/3Wvowty) suggests AMCs don't want to miss out on the transition, when it gains momentum.

> The number of passive fund launches in the year 2022 clearly suggest AMCs don't want to miss out on the transition, when it gains momentum

Need for passive funds

You need passive equity funds as part of your portfolio for several reasons. In the past 3-5 years, funds, especially large cap and multi-cap funds have found it increasingly hard to beat their benchmarks.

Fewer funds beat the index now than a few years ago. Just to illustrate, in 2017 – based on rolling 3-year returns then, almost 8 in 10 large-cap funds beat large-cap benchmarks such as the Nifty 50 or Nifty 100. This has reduced to just 3-4 funds in 10 beating the benchmark now. That means the chance that a large-cap fund you hold will consistently beat the benchmark is below 50%.

When you add a simple index fund, you can at least be sure you are sailing with the market. So, the question of whether your fund is underperforming, or outperforming will not arise. And here's more.

As passive funds mimic an index and have no active fund management, they do not carry hefty expense ratios. This cuts the cost and adds to returns. A few years ago, outside of ETFs/index funds based on the Nifty 50, there were little options to build a diversified equity portfolio with passive funds. It has now changed.

Different market cap

Passive funds come with different market cap categories now – Nifty 50 (large cap), Nifty 500 (multi cap), Nifty Midcap 150, Nifty Small Cap 250 and so on. That means you can actually build a portfolio with different market-cap segments like you would, with an active portfolio.

And then there are strategy-based passive funds or factor investing as they are called – such as value, alpha, low volatility, equal weight, momentum and so on. That means just as you would have a value fund and a growth fund, you would be able to mix different strategies in the passive investment space as well. Of course, strategies can fail but that would be because of the market and not poor fund management.

> The past two years have seen several fund houses come up with open-ended passive debt funds with a maturity date and with high quality papers

Thematic funds

And finally, there are also thematic funds - those that invest in international ETFs and also in local sectors and themes. Most ETFs earlier suffered from low turnover in the stock exchanges and this was a big drawback for retail participation. The good news is that this is changing with volumes improving well for major market-cap indices and a good number of factor indices as well.

And, even if you do not want to buy ETFs (as they need a brokerage account), there are enough options in the index fund space that you can invest in today. To top it, there are Fund of Fund options that allow you to participate in ETFs through the regular fund route.

And passive investing is not restricted to equity. After a series of disastrous events in the debt space between 2018-20, the past two years have seen several fund houses come up with open-ended passive debt funds with a maturity date (called target maturity funds) and with high quality papers.

These can either be bought in exchange (ETF) or invested in like any other fund (Fund-of-Fund route or index funds).

Most of these come with maturity dates across various time frames and hold either PSU bonds or Central and State loan bonds, making them low risk products. They carry low credit risk and do not suffer from risk of fund manager getting it wrong.

As debt fund returns are themselves in single digits, expense ratio can eat into returns. Passive funds give the advantage of low cost and eat less into returns.

If you do not have a passive equity fund, start by adding a large-cap index fund or large and mid, or the 500 index slowly along with existing active funds.

With debt, this may be a good time to lock into high yields with target maturity funds. When you clean up your portfolio, try replacing some exits with passive funds.
(The writer is co-founder, Primeinvestor.in)

Consuming income in retirement

THINKINVESTOR

An MID is a bank deposit that pays interest every month till maturity. So, the amount you invest in the deposit must be such the monthly income covers your living expenses

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Retirees prefer bank monthly income deposits (MID) to fund post-retirement lifestyle. Here, we discuss some features of MID that you must consider before parking retirement savings in such deposits.

Stable income

If you are retired or about to retire, it is natural to look for investment products that generate stable cash flows; you must substitute your active income (from work) with a steady stream of passive income (from investments) to sustain your post-retirement living. Two products typically discussed in this context are MID and joint-life annuities.

An MID is a bank deposit that pays you interest every month till the maturity of the deposit. So, the amount you invest in the deposit should be such that the monthly income covers your living expenses.

There are several benefits with such investments. One, bank deposits are easy to understand, unlike annuities that you can buy from life insurance companies. And two, cash flows are not subject to market uncertainties.

The flip side is that you are exposed to reinvestment risk. Banks typically offer deposits for a maximum of 10 years. Suppose you retire at 60 and invest in a 10-year MID, you must renew the deposit at 70 and at 80. The risk that you may have to renew the deposit at a lower rate is called reinvestment risk. Empirical evidence suggests that your living expenses, even adjusted for inflation, decrease when you are past 75 years. So, even if MID is renewed at a lower rate, you may not face a significant shortfall in cash flows to manage your living expenses. Note that your MID runs credit risk, although the risk is low. This is the risk that a bank could fail to pay your interest on time or fail to return your capital for lack of sufficient funds. So, carefully choose the bank in which you keep your MID.

Consume income

The monthly cash flows some banks pay on MID include interest and a portion of your initial capital. Such deposits may not be behaviourally optimal. Why? Retirees are exposed to longevity risk – the risk that they will outlive their investments. Now, consuming capital could lead to increased longevity risk. What if a retiree runs out of capital because she lives past her life expectancy? Retirees are comfortable consuming income and preserving their capital. This also helps in intentionally transferring the unconsumed capital (deposit) to the next generation as legacy investment.
(The author offers training programme for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to Rs 4,999
Citi Bank	10.75 onwardS	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to 3%
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%
ICICI Bank	10.75 onwards	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to 2.50%
Bank of Baroda	10.60-17.95	10,772-12,683	2,154-2,537	Up to 2% (Min. Rs 1,000 and Max. Rs 10,000)
State Bank of India	10.90-15.40	10,846-12,000	2,169-2,400	NIL
Axis Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	1.5%-2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%
Bank of India	10.10-14.60	10,648-11,790	2,130-2,358	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 5,000)
Canara Bank	12.10-15.80	11,148-12,106	2,230-2,421	Up to 1%
Punjab National Bank	10.15-16.70	10,660-12,346	2,132-2,469	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.75-16.00	10,562-12,159	2,112-2,432	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	10.49-17.99	10,744-12,694	2,149-2,539	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	11.15-15.25	10,909-11,961	2,182-2,392	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Upto 3.84%
Punjab & Sind Bank	10.90-12.50	10,846-11,249	2,169-2,250	Up to 1%
South Indian Bank	12.25-20.00	11,185-13,247	2,237-2,649	Up to 2%
UCO Bank	12.30-12.70	11,198-11,300	2,240-2,260	Up to 1%
IDFC First Bank	10.49 onwards	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to 3.50%
Bank of Maharashtra	9.25-15.05	10,440-11,908	2,088-2,382	Up to 1%
Indian Bank*	9.75-14.75	10,562-11,829	2,112-2,366	Up to 1%
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3%
Karnataka Bank	13.58	11,526	2,305	Up to 0.25% (Minimum Rs 250)

*For pensioners, NIL processing fees for loan upto Rs 25,000, and fees of Rs 250 for loan above Rs 25,000.

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	8.75-12.05	10,319-11,135	Up to Rs. 1,000
Bank of Baroda	8.85-12.15	10,343-11,160	Up to 0.50% (Rs 2,500 - Rs 10,000)
Canara Bank	8.80-11.50	10,331-10,996	NIL till 31st December 2022
Bank of India	8.65-10.60	10,294-10,772	NIL
UCO Bank	8.85 - 10.40	10,343-10,772	1% (Upto Rs 1,500)
State Bank of India	8.40-9.45	10,234-10,489	NIL
IDBI Bank	9.10 - 11.45	10,403-10,984	Rs 2,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	9.05-12.55	10,391-11,262	NIL
Indian Overseas Bank**	9.80	10,574	NIL till 31st December 2022
ICICI Bank	8.50 onwards	10,258 onwards	Rs 999-Rs 5,000
HDFC Bank	8.50 onwards	10,258 onwards	Up to 0.50% (Rs 3,500-Rs 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	9.09-11.14	10,401-10,906	Up to 0.60% (Rs 2,500-Rs 11,000)
Federal Bank	10.75	10,809	Rs 2,000 - Rs 4,500
Indian Bank	8.70-9.45	10,307-10,489	Up to 0.50% (Max. Rs 10,000)
South Indian Bank	11.05-12.50	10,884-11,249	1% (Max: Rs. 10,000)
City Union Bank	13.50-14.00	11,505-11,634	1% (Min: Rs 250)

*0.25% interest rate concession for existing housing loan borrowers and corporate salary account holders. 0.05% interest rate concession to women & armed forces personnel subject to minimum floor ceiling of RLLR.
**0.50% interest rate concession to borrowers with credit scores of 800 and above. Interest rate concession of 0.20% to borrowers for financing Electric 4 Wheelers.

Rates and charges as on December 22 **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

PAT FOR BATTER

The scientist did it, says Sehwag about Ashwin's knock

Former India cricketer Virender Sehwag praised Ashwin's gritty knock against Bangladesh on Sunday by posting the latter's picture as scientist and tweeting "The scientist did it. Somehow got this one. Brilliant innings from Ashwin and wonderful partnership with Shreyas Iyer."

COACH'S PROPOSAL

Conte may rest Tottenham's World Cup players at Brentford

Tottenham Hotspur boss Antonio Conte suggested on Sunday that he might rest World Cup players like Argentina's Cristian Romero, French goalkeeper Hugo Lloris and Croatian Ivan Perisic in the game at Brentford on Boxing Day that marks the Premier League's return. He said he would give a chance to those who stayed behind to train.

STAR SHOW

Tendulkar celebrates Christmas with children from a care centre

Sachin Tendulkar tweeted his Christmas celebrations, writing "Christmas is a time to spread cheer & rightly so when we visited @happyfeethome_, the children brought the widest smiles to our faces. We played, sang songs, ate some cupcakes & clicked pictures. Our #Christmas was made wonderful by these strong & lovely kids!"

BIG BLOW

Curry will be out at least two more weeks for Golden State Warriors

Four-time NBA champion Stephen Curry, sidelined since suffering a partially dislocated left shoulder, will be out for at least another two weeks, the reigning champion Golden State Warriors said Saturday. Curry, who suffered the injury on December 14 at Indiana, has missed the team's past four games.

Ashwin and Shreyas nail a nervy chase as India sweeps series 2-0

The pair puts on 71 runs for the unbroken eighth wicket to help the visitors emerge victors by three wickets after being 74 for seven at one point; Mehidy's five-wicket haul goes in vain for the hosts

INDIA IN BANGLADESH

N. Sudarshan
MIRPUR

For a little over half an hour on a cool, celebratory Christmas morning at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium here, India appeared in a tight, warm embrace with defeat.

Sunday started with the visitors on 45 for four, in pursuit of 145, only to be reduced to 74 for seven. Along with overnight batters Axar Patel and Jaydev Unadkat, Rishabh Pant – the biggest carrier of India's hopes – was back in the pavilion.

But Shreyas Iyer (29 n.o., 46b, 4x4) and R. Ashwin (42 n.o., 62b, 4x4, 1x6) calmed the nerves and dispelled the gloom with a match-winning 71-run partnership to secure a three-wicket win and a 2-0 series triumph.

The victory kept India in second position in the World Test Championship table, sandwiched between Australia and South Africa. Three victories from four Tests against Australia in the home series in February-March can seal a final spot for India.

Happy bunch: Team India poses with the winner's trophy after blanking Bangladesh in the two-Test series. AP

No negativity

It helped that the negativity India's top-order batters had bred late on Saturday didn't trickle down.

Unadkat survived a close leg-before shout off Mehidy Hasan off the third ball of the day, but launched him over mid-wicket for a six the very next delivery.

But that statement of intent didn't last long as Unadkat departed after being trapped in front by Shakib Al Hasan and Mehidy worked his magic bowling a low, stifling line.

Pant daringly reverse-swept Shakib for his first boundary, but was soon pinned on the crease by Mehidy and dismissed leg-before. The offie had his fifer (19-4-63-5) when Axar (34, 69b, 4x4) was bowled off the pads by a delivery that skidded through.

At that point, Shreyas and Ashwin were the last-recognised batters, with nearly half the runs yet to be scored. When Ashwin was on one, Mominul Haque grassed a straightforward chance at short-leg off Mehidy.

India was one step from hell – no offence to Mohd. Siraj and Umesh Yadav – but had somehow survived.

It was to Shreyas and Ashwin's credit that they didn't cower and slip into a shell. There was indeed a phase when no boundary came for a little over 11 overs, but the duo worked the singles to chip away at the target.

The floodgates opened when Shreyas square-drove Mehidy to the fence and followed it up with two fours off Shakib – inside-out over cover and a powerful pull through mid-wicket.

Shakib introduced pace in the 20th over of the day to shake things up but Khaled Ahmed strayed in line and Ashwin duly picked him for two boundaries. The end was swift as Ashwin blasted Mehidy for 16 runs in an over, including a one-handed six over deep mid-wicket and a lofted four over mid-off which was reminiscent of his winning shot against Pakistan in the T20 World Cup.

"When you have taken seven wickets for 75, you can expect the team to win," Shakib said later. "Perhaps we could have bowled better. Maybe created more chances, especially on this type of pitch. [But] I am happy with the way we fought."

SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH — 1ST INNINGS
227 in 73.5 overs
INDIA — 1ST INNINGS
314 in 86.3 overs
BANGLADESH — 2ND INNINGS
231 in 70.2 overs
INDIA — 2ND INNINGS
Shubman Gill st Nurul b Mehidy 7 *(35b)*, K.L. Rahul c Nurul b Shakib 2 *(7b)*, Cheteshwar Pujara st Nurul b Mehidy 6 *(12b, 1x4)*, Axar Patel b Mehidy 34 *(69b, 4x4)*, Virat Kohli c Mominul b Mehidy 1 *(22b)*, Jaydev Unadkat lbw b Shakib 13 *(16b, 1x6)*, Rishabh Pant lbw b Mehidy 9 *(13b, 1x4)*, Shreyas Iyer (not out) 29 *(46b, 4x4)*, R. Ashwin (not out) 42 *(62b, 4x4, 1x6)*; Extras (b-1, lb-1): 2; Total (for seven wkts. in 47 overs): 145.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-3 (Rahul, 2.1 overs), 2-12 (Pujara, 7.1), 3-29 (Gill, 13.2), 4-37 (Kohli, 19.5), 5-56 (Unadkat, 24.4), 6-71 (Pant, 27.6), 7-74 (Axar, 29.3).

BANGLADESH BOWLING
Shakib 14-0-50-2, Taijul 11-4-14-0, Mehidy 19-4-63-5, Taskin 1-0-4-0, Khaled 2-0-12-0.

India won by three wickets to claim the series 2-0.

MoM: Ashwin; **MoS:** Pujara.

Good hand: Ashwin shone with the bat in trying circumstances. AP

Experiences from mistakes done will be handy: Rahul

N. Sudarshan
MIRPUR

India may have swept the two-match Test series but the result will not cover all cracks. Two of India's biggest batters Virat Kohli and K.L. Rahul failed to get going, a major worry ahead of the four-match Test series against Australia in February-March.

In the 36 innings since his last Test century against Bangladesh in Nov. 2019 in Kolkata, Kohli averages 26.20 with just six fifties. Rahul, the stand-in skipper, hasn't gone past 25 in seven straight innings. But is it prudent for out-of-form batters to try and find their form in high-stakes Test matches?

"We obviously don't go into the game thinking of what we may have done previously or what might happen next," Rahul said on Sunday.

"You want to give it your best. Sometimes it doesn't happen. I have seen ups and downs and I know that neither lasts too long."

"When you are playing all three formats, it is tricky to just jump from one to the other. Personally, I haven't played Test cricket in some time and it takes time to get back into the groove.

"Performances in this series haven't been great. I can accept that. I tried my best but it didn't work. But I always look forward and see what I can do better."

Of particular concern is Indian batters' trouble countering spin, an art once considered part of their muscle memory.

"Whatever the conditions, seaming or turning, batters will get out," said Rahul.

"If it is a pattern, you will work with your coaches and see where things are wrong."

"We have four important Tests against Australia and there will be assistance for spin. Australia will be prepared. They will study the conditions, the pitches.

"Preparation and hard work are in our hands. [But] You will never be perfect. Even if we play just spin in the next one month, it doesn't guarantee hundreds in every match. You just prepare with the right mindset. The mistakes we have done here, the experiences we have had will be handy."

Would've loved to have Kuldeep as Impact Player, says Rahul

Sports Bureau

Kuldeep Yadav's non-selection for the Mirpur Test against Bangladesh had led to fierce criticism but skipper K.L. Rahul defended the move.

"If we had an Impact Player rule here like in the IPL, I would have loved to have Kuldeep in the second innings," Rahul said. "It was a tough call, knowing and understanding that he had just won a Test for us."

"But seeing the pitch before the game, we felt that there will be assistance for both fast bowlers and spinners. We wanted to play the best balanced team and that's the call we made. I don't regret that and that was the right decision."

Australia determined to break the South Africa jinx on home soil

SA IN AUSTRALIA

Associated Press
MELBOURNE

Last year's Boxing Day hero Scott Boland has retained his spot in Australia's bowling attack and will line up at the Melbourne Cricket Ground against South Africa beginning on Monday.

The fast bowler will return to the scene of his Test debut last December, with Australia selectors opting for Boland over Josh Hazlewood, who is continuing his recovery from a side strain.

Captain Pat Cummins confirmed on Sunday that Australia would stick with the same XI that beat the Proteas by six wickets in just two days in the first Test at the Gabba in Brisbane.

"We gave Joshy every chance, it just got to a stage where Joshy more than anyone else probably thought he was a bit underdone," Cummins said.

Tuning up: Scott Boland will hope to emulate last year's Boxing Day performance against England. AFP

Australia will be looking to secure its first series win against South Africa on home soil since 2005-06 by going 2-0 up at the MCG.

Veteran opener David Warner will become just the 14th Australian to play 100 Test matches when he lines up against the South Africans.

The left-handed batter will be hoping his milestone match brings about some runs in the red-ball format – he has not scored a century since January 2020.

South Africa captain Dean Elgar has confirmed at least one change to his side's batting line-up but would not say who is in or out ahead of Monday's toss.

Praises pace attack

While Elgar praises his team's pace attack as the best in the world, South Africa is not making enough runs to give the bowlers a realistic chance. It has scored more than 400 only once this year, against Bangladesh.

South Africa's woes were highlighted on the Gabba green-top in the first Test.

Elgar said the MCG pitch is firming up well as Melbourne's weather improves. "I hope it's the past and never to be repeated again."

Pakistan, New Zealand seek revival in Test fortunes

Associated Press
KARACHI

Pakistan captain Babar Azam is focusing on turning around his team's fortunes in the upcoming two-Test series against New Zealand rather than getting distracted by the sudden shake-up of the Pakistan Cricket Board set-up.

"Things have changed in the past two, three days and there have been changes, but as a professional you have to face such things," Babar said on the eve of the first Test.

Good start

"Our job is to put effort on the ground and our full focus is on how to win the match, how to take a good start in the series and how to do well in all the three departments of the game."

"We could not play the last series the way we wanted and committed small mistakes that left us behind," Babar said.

"I don't take pressure. If you take pressure your game goes down. I have belief that it's a new day, new team and a new match, so things will be different."

Another slow grassless wicket has been prepared for the first Test with spinners from both sides expected to call the shots as the games progress.

Sajid Khan returns to the squad after missing out on the last two series against Sri Lanka and England.

Like Pakistan, New Zealand was also whitewashed 3-0 by England after McCullum and captain Ben Stokes took charge of the team last summer.

Team bonding: NZ players in a practice session in Karachi. AFP

Ankushita stuns Parveen to make the 66kg final

Lovlina sets up a summit clash with Arundhati; Nikhat, Jyoti Gulia and Sakshi stay on course; Manisha stuns the seasoned Sonia in the last four

NATIONAL BOXING

Sports Bureau

Asian bronze medallist Ankushita Boro upset 63kg World championships medallist and Asian champion Parveen Hooda in a thrilling 66kg semifinal contest in the National women's boxing championships in Bhopal on Sunday.

Ankushita, a World youth champion who secured the National Games gold medal and an Asian bronze this year, asserted her supremacy as she edged past Parveen, who jumped to the Olympic weight, with a 4-3 verdict following the review of the bout.

Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain and her keen competitor World youth champion Arundhati Chaudhary, who also went up to 75kg, won their respective last-four bouts to set up a mouthwatering title clash.

Nikhat Zareen, the 52kg World champion, will take on Anamika in the 50kg gold medal bout.

World youth champions Jyoti Gulia and Sakshi Chaudhary also posted victories to set a final date in 52kg.

Worlds bronze medallist Manisha Moun stunned the seasoned Sonia Lather, a Worlds silver medallist, 4-1 to reach the 57kg final.

Narrow win: Ankushita, right, edged past Asian champion Parveen. A.M. FARUQUI

The results (semifinals):

48kg: Manju Rani (RSPB) bt Anjali Sharma (MP) 5-0, S. Kalaivani (TN) bt Rajni Singh (UP) 5-0; **50kg:** Nikhat Zareen (Tel) bt Shvinder Kaur Sidhu (AIP) 5-0, Anamika (RSPB) bt Kalpana (Har) 4-0. **52kg:** Jyoti Gulia (RSPB) bt Sonia (UP) 4-1, Sakshi Chaudhary (SSCB) bt Radha Patidar (MP) 5-0; **54kg:** Sunita (HP) bt M. Dhivya (TN) 5-0, Shiksha (RSPB) bt Divya Pawar (MP) 5-0.

57kg: Vinakshi (HP) bt Purnima Rajput (MP) 5-0, Manisha Moun (Har) bt Sonia Lather (RSPB) 4-1; **60kg:** Simranjit Kaur (Pun) bt Kros Hmangaihsangi (AIP) 5-0, Poonam (RSPB) bt Preeti (Nag) 5-0.

63kg: Shashi Chopra (RSPB) bt Neema (Chd) 5-0, Mahi Lamba (MP) bt Rinky Sharma (UP) 5-0; **66kg:** Manju Bamboria (MP) bt Komalpreet Kaur (Pun) 5-0, Ankushita Boro (Asm) bt Parveen Hooda (AIP) 4-3.

70kg: Sanamacha Chanu (Man) bt Lalita (Raj) 4-1, Shruti Yadav (MP) bt Jyoti (RSPB) 4-1.

75kg: Arundhati Chaudhary (SSCB) bt Bhawna (AIP) 5-0, Lovlina Borgohain (Asm) bt Jigyasa Rajput (MP) 5-0.

81kg: Saweety Boora (Har) bt Sushma (AIP) 5-0, Anupama (RSPB) bt M.Sribhavana (TN) RSC-R1; **+81kg:** Nupur (RSPB) bt Lipakshi (Raj) w.o.; Monika (AIP) bt Neha (Har) 5-0.

A rewarding year for the peerless Sharath Kamal

TT REVIEW

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The age-defying Achanta Sharath Kamal shone on and off the court while Manika Batra achieved another first for Indian table tennis despite the administrative crisis the sport had to endure over the past 12 months.

With three gold medals, including a singles title after 16 years, at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, the 40-year-old Sharath showed that age was just a number. His other gold medals came in the team and mixed (with Sreeja Akula) events.

He plans to hang up his boots only after the Paris Olympics but 2022 also saw him getting into sports administration.

He was elected as the vice-chair of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) athletes' commission before becoming the first Indian to be elected the joint chair of the players' body in the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF).

Rich haul: Sharath Kamal lit up the table tennis event at the CWG with four gold medals. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Getting his due

Sharath finally got his due from the government when he became the first table tennis player to receive the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award, India's highest sporting honour.

Having bagged an unprecedented four medals in the 2018 CWG, expectations were high from Manika in Birmingham. But had to return empty-handed.

However, a superb performance was to follow in the Asia Cup in Bangkok three months later. Manika raised her game to stun two top-10 players to secure a bronze, the first by an Indian in the tournament's rich history.

Legal battles

The start to the year was rather grim as the Delhi High Court suspended the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) after observing a "sorry" state of affairs in the governing body.

Though there were fears that it would impact the players' preparation for international events, the court-appointed Committee of Administrators running the TTFI ensured the training of elite athletes remained largely unaffected.

While looking after the functioning of the federation, the CoA too got locked in a host of legal hurdles. Manush Shah, Swastika Ghosh, Archana Kamath and Diya Chitale challenged their exclusion from the CWG squad and only Chitale managed to make it to Birmingham.

New office bearers took charge of the federation earlier this month and their first task will be to conduct Nationals.

Large Indian presence in World rapid and blitz meet

Sports Bureau

Arjun Erigaisi has been seeded 12th in the blitz and D. Harika enjoys the fourth spot among women's list of seeding for the rapid section in the World rapid and blitz chess championship that begins in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on Monday.

Magnus Carlsen is back in search of an eighth gold medal from the championship.

After 13 rounds of rapid games in three days, the two-day 13-round blitz segment will open on December 30.

Top seed and Indian seeds:
Open: Rapid: 1. Magnus Carlsen (Nor); 22. Vidit Gujrathi, 26. Surya Shekhar Ganguly, 27. P. Harikrishna, 38. Arjun Erigaisi, 39. Nihal Sarin, 49. S.L. Narayanan, 62. Aravindh Chithambaram, 64. Harsha Bharathakoti, 76. Abhimanyu Puranik, 81. B. Adhiban, 88. Raunak Sadhwani, 100. N. Srinath, 133. V. Pranav, 134. Arjun Kalyan, 143. Sankalp Gupta.

Blitz: 1. Hikaru Nakamura (USA); 12. Arjun, 19. Nihal, 24. Vidit, 30. Raunak, 46. Harikrishna, 50. Adhiban, 68. Aravindh, 89. Narayanan, 104. Ganguly, 108. Harsha, 115. Puranik, 127. Srinath, 129. Pranav, 132. Sankalp.

Women: Rapid: 1. Alexandra Kosteniuk (FIDE); 6. D. Harika, 7. K. Humpy, 32. Tania Sachdev, 36. B. Savitha Shri, 39. Padmini Rout, 52. Divya Despande.

Blitz: 1. Kateryna Lagno (FIDE); 4. Humpy, 5. Alexandra Kosteniuk (FIDE), 10. Harika, 27. Divya, 30. Savitha, 32. Tania, 37. Padmini.

INBRIEF

Contador has surgery to remove 100+ tumours

Retired double Tour de France winner Alberto Contador has undergone surgery to remove more than 100 benign tumours. The Spaniard posted a video on Instagram in which he pulled up his shirt to show his torso swathed in bandages. Both legs were swaddled. "Yesterday it was time to go to the repair shop. I needed to get some lipomas removed and it turned out I had over 100!" he wrote. Indicating to the bicycle on the wall behind him, he he hoped to be back on it "in the next month or so". A lipoma is a fatty non-cancerous tumour between skin and muscles

Services wins six medals in National junior boys' boxing

Services claimed maximum top honours, altogether six, in the National junior boys' boxing championships in Patna. Haryana boxers claimed five gold medals.

Gold medal winners: 46kg: Brijesh Tamta (Utk), **48kg:** Athrva Bidkar (Mah), **50kg:** Aryan (SSCB), **52kg:** Abdul Qadir (Har), **54kg:** Nikhil (Har), **57kg:** Jatin (SSCB), **60kg:** Rupesh (Har), **63kg:** Yashwardhan Singh (Har), **66kg:** Karan Bisht (SSCB), **70kg:** Prince (SSCB), **75kg:** Sahil (SSCB), **80kg:** Aryan (SSCB), **+80kg:** Lakshay Rathi (Har).

Abhijeet and Koustav share the lead

NATIONAL CHESS

Rakesh Rao
NEW DELHI

It was a merry time for Abhijeet Gupta and Koustav Chatterjee following their easier-than-expected victories for a perfect score after four rounds of the National chess championship here on Sunday.

Abhijeetowed it to the generosity of G.B. Harshavardhan who overlooked the loss of a knight without compensation and resigned in 49 moves. Koustav managed to add a second queen after pushing a queenside pawn to the distance against S. Nitin, who gave up in 43 moves.

The other two games involving the leaders ended as draws. Top seed S.P. Sethuraman and last edition's third-placed P. Iniyan played out a 60-move draw. Iniyan's extra pawn could not give him a decisive edge. Vedant Panesar did well to hold Aronyak Ghosh in 22 moves following a three-fold repetition of moves.

Following Abhijeet and Koustav, seeded three and eight, are 10 players at 3.5 points. Another 34 players, including eight GMs, are at three points.

Leading results (fourth round): P. Iniyan (3.5) drew with S.P. Sethuraman (3.5); G.B. Harshvardhan (3) lost to Abhijeet Gupta (4); Vedant Panesar (3.5) drew with Aronyak Ghosh (3.5).

Koustav Chatterjee (4) bt S. Nitin (3); Utsab Chatterjee (2.5) lost to N.R. Visakh (3.5); Karthik Venkataraman (3) drew with Subhayan Kundu (3).

Utkal Ranjan Sahoo (3) drew with P. Shyaamnikhil (3); Mitrabha Guha (3.5) bt Vardaan Nagpal (2.5); P. Karthikeyan (3) drew with Sandipan Chanda (3).

Leon Mendonca (3) bt Shreyansh Daklia (2.5); M. Shyam Sundar (3) bt N. Surendran (2); N.R. Vignesh (2.5) drew with J. Akshit Kumar (2.5); M. Srinivasa Rao (2) lost to M.R. Venkatesh (3).

LIVE TELECAST

Australia vs South Africa: 2nd Test, day 1, Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 5 a.m.

NBA: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Voot Select, 6.30 & 9 a.m.

Pakistan vs New Zealand: 1st Test, day 1, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 10.30 a.m.

ISL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 7.30 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1 & 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8.30, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

Shriyanka prevails over Yukthi to clinch the gold medal

SHOOTING

Sports Bureau
NAVI MUMBAI

Shriyanka Sadangi clinched the gold in the 13th RR Lakshya Cup air rifle shooting competition with a 16-12 victory over Yukthi Rajendra at the Kamala Sports Academy in Panvel on Sunday.

In winning the gold, the 27-year-old Shriyanka who had won a mixed bronze medal in the Cairo World Cup this year, became only the second woman champion of the gender neutral Lakshya Cup.

Interestingly, Shriyanka had finished runner-up to Meghana Sajjanar in 2016, the previous woman champion, and had always wanted to get her hand on the champion's trophy.

In a tough competition, in which the reigning World Champion Rudrankksh Patil (628.2) failed to make the medal stage, Shriyanka was consistently brilliant in pocketing the winner's purse of ₹1,50,000.

Shriyanka topped qualification with 631.4, with the second best Samiksha Dhingra managing 629.3. In the elimination round, Shriyanka topped with 261.2, while Yukthi kept pace with her to reach the gold medal match, a mere 0.3 point behind.

Winners: Suma, Yukthi, champion Shriyanka, Vidit, Siddharth, and chief guest Avani Lekhara at the Lakshya Cup shooting championship. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

In the gold contest, Shriyanka was leading 12-6 before the 18-year-old Yukthi pressed hard with a string of good shots including a 10.9 to bridge the gap to 12-14. However, Shriyanka sealed the gold with a 10.3 as Yukthi shot 10.0.

"I have had a good year and this was the cherry on the cake", said Shriyanka, all praise for Dronacharya Suma Shirur, the president of Lakshya Club for the meticulous conduct of the championship and best guidance over the years.

Vidit Jain bagged the bronze ahead of Sandeep, Harshit Bingwa, Samiksha, Vinita Bharadwaj and of course Rudrankksh.

The runner-up and third placed shooters collected ₹75,000 and ₹40,000 respectively.

Arya Borse won the junior gold, as she defended her title won last year, by outclassing Parth Mane 17-4. Ashi Chouksey won the bronze ahead of Sachin who had topped qualification with 628.5.

The junior champion was presented ₹75,000 while the runner-up and third placed were given ₹40,000 and ₹20,000 respectively.

There were special prizes of ₹25,000 for highest inner tens (Parth Mane, 57); highest series (Sachin & Vinita Bhardwaj 106.4); highest 10.9s (Kiran Jadhav & Vamshi Eligeti 5).

Paralympic gold medallist Avani Lekhara was the chief guest.

The results: **10m air rifle**: 1. Shriyanka Sadangi 16 (261.2) 631.4; 2. Yukthi Rajendra 12 (259.8) 628.0; 3. Vidit Jain 259.8 (628.9); 4. Sandeep 258.6 (627.3).
Juniors: 1. Arya Borse (17 (264.2) 628.0; 2. Parth Mane 4 (260.5) 627.4; 3. Ashi Chouksey 259.4 (626.6); 4. Sachin 258.5 (628.5).

Hugh Capet could score an encore in feature event

HYDERABAD: Trainer Magan Singh's Hugh Capet, who won well in his last start, may repeat the performance in the Shravan Kumar Memorial Cup, the chief event of Monday's (Dec. 26) races.

1 ASTONISH PLATE (1,200m), (Terms) Maiden, 2-y-o only (Cat. II), 1.45 p.m.: 1. Ashwa Gajraj (5) G. Naresh 56, 2. Caraxes (3) B.R. Kumar 56, 3. Faiz (4) Aneel 56, 4. High Command (1) Akshay Kumar 56, 5. Maverick (6) A.A. Vikrant 56, 6. That's My Love (7) Mohit Singh 56, 7. Toffee (2) Afroz Khan 54.5 and 8. Warwick (8) B. Nikhil 54.5.
1. HIGH COMMAND, 2. TOFFEE, 3. FAIZ

2 STORM TROOPER PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 2.15: 1. Doe A Deer (1) Aneel 60, 2. Picture Me (2) A.A. Vikrant 55, 3. Deccan Ranger (5) Santosh Raj 53, 4. N R I Majestic (7) Abhay Singh 51.5, 5. Sporting Smile (4) Ajay Kumar 51, 6. Inside Story (3) B. Nikhil 50.5, 7. Sea Of Class (6) Surya Prakash 50.5 and 8. Siri (8) G. Naresh 50.5.
1. PICTURE ME, 2. SIRI, 3. DOE A DEER

3 DILAGE PLATE (1,400m), 5-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 2.45: 1. Angel Tesoro (8) Akshay Kumar 60, 2. Francis Bacon (3) Kuldeep S 60, 3. Star Babe (2) Shivansh 60, 4. Explosive (6) Mohit Singh 56.5, 5. Lightning Fairy (7) P. Ajeeth Kumar 54, 6. Ice Berry (5) Md. Ekram Alam 53.5, 7. Exponent (4) Gaurav Singh 51.5 and 8. Sucker Punch (1) B. Nikhil 51.5.
1. ANGEL TESORO, 2. STAR BABE, 3. FRANCIS BACON

4 DYNAMIC DANCER CUP (1,600m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 3.15: 1. Acrobat (5) P. Ajeeth Kumar 60, 2. Quality Warrior (6) B.R. Kumar 59.5, 3. Alabama (1) Akshay Kumar 58.5, 4. Golden Inzio (8) Mukesh Kumar 57, 5. Queen Blossom (9) Md. Ismail 56.5, 6. Soorya Vahan (4) Mohit Singh 56, 7. Special And Thong (2) B. Nikhil 55.5, 8. Alpine Girl (7) Santosh Raj 55 and 9. Power Ranger (3) Gaurav Singh 53.5.
1. ACROBAT, 2. ALABAMA, 3. GOLDEN INZIO

5 GANGOTRI PLATE (1,400m), rated upto 25 (Cat. III), 3.45: 1. My Grandeur (3) Mohit Singh 60, 2. Royal Pal (6) Md. Ekram Alam 60, 3. Wot's Up Jay (2) B. Nikhil 59, 4. Jack Daniel (5) Gaurav Singh 58.5. 5. Good Day (1) R.S. Jodha 58, 6. Ikra (8) Aneel 58, 7. Arba Wahed Arba (4) Afroz Khan 57 and 8. Ar Superior (7) Santosh Raj 54
1. ROYAL PAL, 2. WOT'S UP JAY, 3. AR SUPERIOR

6 SHRAVAN KUMAR MEMORIAL CUP (1,600m), rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 4.15: 1. Winning Streak (5) Afroz Khan 60, 2. Hugh Capet (4) Akshay Kumar 59.5, 3. Barbet (3) B. Nikhil 58, 4. Ambitious Star (2) R.S. Jodha 56.5, 5. Candy Girl (6) Gaurav Singh 56, 6. Fly Tothe Stars (7) B.R. Kumar 55.5 and 7. Painted Apache (1) P. Ajeeth Kumar 55.5.
1. HUGH CAPET, 2. WINNING STREAK, 3. FLY TOTHE STARS

7 STORM TROOPER PLATE (1,200m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 4.45: 1. Bangor On Dee (6) Akshay Kumar 60, 2. Ashwa Shirwal (8) B.R. Kumar 57, 3. High Reward (2) R.S. Jodha 53.5, 4. Nishaan (7) Mohit Singh 52.5, 5. Sorry Darling (4) P. Ajeeth Kumar 51, 6. First Class (3) Surya Prakash 50.5, 7. Protocol (5) B. Nikhil 50.5 and 8. Star Cruise (1) Kuldeep S 50.5.
1. BANGOR ON DEE, 2. PROTOCOL, 3. STAR CRUISE

Day's Best: **HIGH COMMAND**
Jackpot: 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7.
Mini Jackpot: (i) 1, 2, 3 & 4. (ii) 4, 5, 6 & 7.
Treble: (i) 2, 3 & 4. (ii) 5, 6 & 7.
Tanala: All races.

Indian junior archers reap it rich in Asia Cup

Press Trust of India
SHARJAH

The Indian junior archers reigned supreme in the Asia Cup Stage III by returning with nine medals, including five gold and three silver, here on Sunday.

The biggest medal haul came from the compound section.

Indians won seven of the eight medals up from grabs, including a sweep in the individual women's section where Pragati, Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur took the top three spots.

Priyansh and Ojas Deotale bagged gold and silver in the compound individual section.

The compound archers also topped the team events in both men's and women's sections, defeating Korea en route to gold.

In recurve section, India bagged a gold and a silver. The men's team of Akash Mrinal Chauhan and Parth Salunkhe won gold defeating Korea.

Tisha Punia and Salunkhe took silver after losing to Kai-Han Yang and Szu-Min Su of Chinese Taipei in mixed team event.